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TALES OF ARMY LIFE

BY
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Translated by
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LEO TOLSTÓY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

It is intended that the translations published in the Centenary Edition of Tolstóy's works shall all eventually be reproduced in the 'World's Classics' series, but this cannot be done at once. The volumes in the Centenary Edition, not being sold separately, are numbered in order to show at a glance which are his earlier and which his later works. In the 'World's Classics' series the volumes are sold separately and are consequently not numbered. But it is important for readers wishing to understand the development of Tolstóy's views to note to what period any work they are reading belongs.

The early 'trials of the pen', as Tolstóy called them, which followed *Childhood* but preceded *War and Peace*, occupy two volumes. Five *Tales of Army Life* are in this, and *Nine Stories, 1852-63*, not dealing with war, are in another. A liberty with the chronological sequence has been taken by including in the present volume a short article written in 1889 to serve as preface to *Recollections of Sevastopol*, a book written by a fellow officer of Tolstóy's. Strictly speaking, that article should have come later among the essays, but as it is closely connected with Tolstóy's sketches of Sevastopol, readers may prefer to have it here.

Finding that he would not be allowed to publish that preface, Tolstóy never finally completed or revised it, but he allowed a friend of his, V. G. Chertkóv, to print the Russian text in England. It serves to show how much more definite his anti-war opinions had become in his later years.

In *The Raid* we see that from the first Tolstóy questioned the justifiability of war, and then we see how gradually, tentatively, and with what retrogressions, he reached categorical and absolute condemnation. *The Raid* appeared in a magazine in March

1852. Writing to his brother Sergey he said: '*The Raid* was simply ruined by the censor. All that was good in it has been struck out or mutilated.' An examination of Tolstóy's manuscripts recently undertaken in Russia makes it possible at last to restore the passages then suppressed by the censor. They are here enclosed in square brackets to distinguish them from matter previously published. The same has been done elsewhere in this volume, and in *Sevastopol* besides various shorter passages—in some cases single lines—one whole chapter is given for the first time. Not content with striking out these passages, the censor demanded the insertion of sentiments he considered desirable, and when I first translated *Sevastopol*, some thirty years ago, I was taken aback by some of these and asked Tolstóy whether he had written them. His reply was: 'All the extracts you sent were either altered or inserted by the editor [of the magazine] to meet the wishes of the censor, and it would therefore be better to omit them.' One of these passages ran: 'But here it seems to you that peril, animosity, and the sufferings of war have imprinted on each face a consciousness of its own worth and of elevated thoughts and feelings.' These censor-inspired passages have, of course, been here omitted in accord with Tolstóy's wish.

In the first of the *Sevastopol* sketches it is evident that Tolstóy, who had applied to be transferred to the Crimean front from the quieter Caucasus, began the campaign with the patriotic ardour that often actuates volunteers at the outbreak of a war. In May 1855 he wrote to his brother: 'I petitioned to be sent to the Crimea in order to see this war . . . but most of all from patriotism of which at that time, I confess, I had a bad attack.' *Sevastopol in December 1854* was indeed written in a tone that attracted the favourable attention of Alexander II, who had it translated into French and sent instructions to 'take care of the life of that

young man'. Tolstóy had only to continue as he had begun and the path to Imperial favour and to success lay open. But it was always his way to say what he thought without much regard for what was expected of him, and a few months in Sevastopol opened his eyes to the nature of war. In the second of the Sevastopol sketches, *Sevastopol in May*, he expressed his moral disapproval of it, ending with the words: 'The hero of my tale—whom I love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all his beauty, who has been, is, and will be, beautiful—is Truth.'

When sending that article to the magazine in which it was published he wrote: 'I am sending you the Sevastopol article. Though I am convinced that it is incomparably better than the first one I am sure it will not please—I am even afraid it will not be allowed at all.' Next day he noted in his diary: 'I have only now reached the period of real temptation by vanity. I could gain much in life if I were willing to work without conviction.'

The censor intervened, and Nekrásov, the editor of the magazine, wrote to Tolstóy saying: 'The revolting mutilation of your article quite upset me. Even now I cannot think of it without regret and rage. Your work will, of course, not be lost . . . it will always remain as proof of a strength which was able to utter such profound and sober truth in circumstances amid which few men would have retained it. It is just what Russian society now needs: the truth—the truth, of which since Gógol's death so little has remained in Russian literature. You are right to value that side of your gifts most of all. Truth—in such form as you have introduced it into our literature—is something completely new among us. I do not know another writer of to-day who so compels the reader to love him and sympathize heartily with him as he to whom I now write, and I only fear lest time, the nastiness

of life, and the deafness and dumbness that surround us, should do to you what it has done to most of us, and kill the energy without which there can be no writer—none at least such as Russia needs.'

Naturally Tolstóy fell into disfavour with the authorities and received no promotion, but he jocularly remarked many years later: 'I did not become a general in the army, but I have become one in literature.' Indeed it was just the frank and fearless expression of his feelings, regardless of what was demanded of him, that secured the attention and sympathy of a world-wide public.

But he was not immune from temptations of ambition or intellect. One day, when talking about Sevastopol, he told me that when writing these sketches he was aware that, contending with his desire to tell the truth as he saw it, there was another feeling prompting him to say what was expected of him.

Some ten years later, in his concluding remarks on *War and Peace*, at a time when he was at peace with himself and with life, we find him speaking of war in a much more detached manner: 'Why did millions of people kill one another when it has been known since the world began that it is physically and morally bad to do so? Because it was such an inevitable necessity that in doing it men fulfilled the elementary zoological law which bees fulfil when they kill one another in autumn, and which causes male animals to destroy one another.' When describing in his great novel Russia's heroic and successful resistance to the Napoleonic invasion, he was once more experiencing an 'attack of patriotism'.

Only considerably later, in works that will be found in other volumes, did he finally reach the conclusion that war is always and utterly wrong. That opinion—be it sound or not—was not suddenly or capriciously adopted but was the slow outcome of experience, reflexion, and struggle, and certainly ran counter to

some feelings deeply implanted in his own nature. Even as late as 1904, when he was seventy-six, he wept at the news of the capture of Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese war, and indignantly declared that those who had fought at Sevastopol would certainly not have surrendered Port Arthur while such resources were at their disposal as the garrison of Port Arthur still possessed.

The last story in this book, *The Cossacks: a Tale of 1852*, was meant to be the first section of a three-part novel. Its sub-title indicates that it deals with conditions as they were in 1852, and has nothing to do with the period of the composition or publication of the story. Tolstóy worked at it and revised it off and on for at least ten years, and it was eventually sold for a payment in advance, when he was in need of ready money to meet a loss incurred in playing Chinese billiards. The story was published in 1863, and instead of writing the sequels he had planned, he then set to work on *War and Peace*. Turgénev had a very high opinion of *The Cossacks*, which is probably the best story Tolstóy published before his marriage.

Eróshka was a real character whose name was Epishka. The original of Maryánka was a girl named Solomónida who eventually married a Cossack. Olénin's relations to Maryánka closely resemble Tolstóy's to Solomónida. In general Tolstóy used so much autobiographical material in these stories that some writers have treated him as responsible for all that any of his heroes said or did. That of course is going too far, and is quite unjustifiable.

In the long succession of those who from the days of Isaiah have carried on the struggle to secure the supremacy of peace over war, Tolstóy holds an honourable and a prominent place. No one of his race or generation obtained so wide an international hearing for so trenchant an indictment of militarism as he, and in these *Tales of Army Life*, a prelude to the

greater works that come later, we can already discern his fundamental characteristics: his keenness of observation, his recognition of what is of fundamental importance, his interest in life's great problems, and his courage in forming opinions conflicting with those prevalent in his day and among those with whom he lived.

Attention to the sequence of Tolstóy's works sheds much light on him and on his aims, and adds assurance, were that still needed, of his singular sincerity, candour, and courage.

AYLMER MAUDE.

May 1935.

THE RAID
A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

THE RAID

A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

The portions of this story enclosed in square brackets are those the Censor suppressed, and are now published in English for the first time.

CHAPTER I

[WAR always interested me: not war in the sense of manœuvres devised by great generals—my imagination refused to follow such immense movements. I did not understand them—but the reality of war, the actual killing. I was more interested to know in what way and under the influence of what feeling one soldier kills another than to know how the armies were arranged at Austerlitz and Borodinó.

I had long passed the time when, pacing the room alone and waving my arms, I imagined myself a hero instantaneously slaughtering an immense number of men and receiving a generalship as well as imperishable glory for so doing. The question now occupying me was different: under the influence of what feeling does a man, with no apparent advantage to himself, decide to subject himself to danger and, what is more surprising still, to kill his fellow men? I always wished to think that this is done under the influence of anger, but we cannot suppose that all those who fight are angry all the time, and I had to postulate feelings of self-preservation and duty.

What is courage—that quality respected in all ages and among all nations? Why is this good quality—contrary to all others—sometimes met with in vicious men? Can it be that to endure danger calmly is merely a physical capacity and that people respect it in the same way that they do a man's tall stature or robust frame? Can a horse be called brave, which

fearing the whip throws itself down a steep place where it will be smashed to pieces; or a child who fearing to be punished runs into a forest where it will lose itself; or a woman who for fear of shame kills her baby and has to endure penal prosecution; or a man who from vanity resolves to kill a fellow creature and exposes himself to the danger of being killed?

In every danger there is a choice. Does it not depend on whether the choice is prompted by a noble feeling or a base one whether it should be called courage or cowardice? These were the questions and the doubts that occupied my mind and to decide which I intended to avail myself of the first opportunity to go into action.

In the summer of 184— I was living in the Caucasus at the small fortified post of N——.]

On the twelfth of July Captain Khlópov entered the low door of my earth-hut. He was wearing epaulettes and carrying a sword, which I had never before seen him do since I had reached the Caucasus.

‘I come straight from the colonel’s,’ he said in answer to my questioning look. ‘To-morrow our battalion is to march.’

‘Where to?’ I asked.

‘To M. The forces are to assemble there.’

‘And from there I suppose they will go into action?’

‘I expect so.’

‘In what direction? What do you think?’

‘What is there to think about? I am telling you what I know. A Tartar galloped here last night and brought orders from the general for the battalion to march with two days’ rations of rusks. But where to, why, and for how long, we do not ask, my friend. We are told to go—and that’s enough.’

‘But if you are to take only two days’ rations of rusks it proves that the troops won’t be out longer than that.’

‘It proves nothing at all!’

'How is that?' I asked with surprise.

'Because it is so. We went to Dargo and took one week's rations of rusks, but we stayed there nearly a month.'

'Can I go with you?' I asked after a pause.

'You could, no doubt, but my advice is, don't. Why run risks?'

'Oh, but you must allow me not to take your advice. I have been here a whole month solely on the chance of seeing an action, and you wish me to miss it!'

'Well, you must please yourself. But really you had better stay behind. You could wait for us here and might go hunting—and we would go our way, and it would be splendid,' he said with such conviction that for a moment it really seemed to me too that it would be 'splendid'. However, I told him decidedly that nothing would induce me to stay behind.

'But what is there for you to see?' the captain went on, still trying to dissuade me. 'Do you want to know what battles are like? Read Mikháylovski Danílevski's *Description of War*. It's a fine book, it gives a detailed account of everything. It gives the position of every corps and describes how battles are fought.'

'All that does not interest me,' I replied.

'What is it then? Do you simply wish to see how people are killed?—In 1832 we had a fellow here, also a civilian, a Spaniard I think he was. He took part with us in two campaigns, wearing some kind of blue mantle. Well, they did for the fine fellow. You won't astonish anyone here, friend!'

Humiliating though it was that the captain so misjudged my motives, I did not try to disabuse him.

'Was he brave?' I asked.

'Heaven only knows: he always used to ride in front, and where there was firing there he always was.'

'Then he must have been brave,' said I.

'No. Pushing oneself in where one is not needed does not prove one to be brave.'

‘Then what do you call brave?’

‘Brave? . . . Brave?’ repeated the captain with the air of one to whom such a question presents itself for the first time. ‘He who does what he ought to do is brave,’ he said after thinking awhile.

I remembered that Plato defines courage as ‘The knowledge of what should and what should not be feared’, and despite the looseness and vagueness of the captain’s definition I thought that the fundamental ideas of the two were not so different as they might appear, and that the captain’s definition was even more correct than that of the Greek philosopher. For if the captain had been able to express himself like Plato he would no doubt have said that, ‘He is brave who fears only what should be feared and not what should not be feared’.

I wished to explain my idea to the captain.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘it seems to me that in every danger there is a choice, and a choice made under the influence of a sense of duty is courage, but a choice made under the influence of a base motive is cowardice. Therefore a man who risks his life from vanity, curiosity, or greed, cannot be called brave; while on the other hand he who avoids a danger from honest consideration for his family, or simply from conviction, cannot be called a coward.’

The captain looked at me with a curious expression while I was speaking.

‘Well, that I cannot prove to you,’ he said, filling his pipe, ‘but we have a cadet here who is fond of philosophizing. You should have a talk with him. He also writes verses.’

I had known of the captain before I left Russia, but I had only made his acquaintance in the Caucasus. His mother, Mary Ivánovna Khlópova, a small and poor landowner, lives within two miles of my estate. Before I left for the Caucasus I had called on her. The old lady was very glad to hear that I should see

her 'Páshenka', by which pet name she called the grey-haired elderly captain, and that I, 'a living letter', could tell him all about her and take him a small parcel from her. Having treated me to excellent pie and smoked goose, Mary Ivánovna went into her bedroom and returned with a black bag to which a black silk ribbon was attached.

'Here, this is the icon of our Mother Mediatress of the Burning Bush,' said she, crossing herself and kissing the icon of the Virgin and placing it in my hands. 'Please let him have it. You see, when he went to the Caucasus I had a Mass said for him and promised, if he remained alive and safe, to order this icon of the Mother of God for him. And now for eighteen years the Mediatress and the Holy Saints have had mercy on him, he has not been wounded once, and yet in what battles has he not taken part? . . . What Michael who went with him told me was enough, believe me, to make one's hair stand on end. You see, what I know about him is only from others. He, my pet, never writes me about his campaigns for fear of frightening me.'

(After I reached the Caucasus I learnt, and then not from the captain himself, that he had been severely wounded four times and of course never wrote to his mother either about his wounds or his campaigns.)

'So let him now wear this holy image,' she continued. 'I give it him with my blessing. May the Most Holy Mediatress guard him. Especially when going into battle let him wear it. Tell him so, dear friend. Say "Your mother wishes it."'

I promised to carry out her instructions carefully.

'I know you will grow fond of my Páshenka,' continued the old lady. 'He is such a splendid fellow. Will you believe it, he never lets a year pass without sending me some money, and he also helps my daughter Ánnushka a good deal, and all out of his

pay! I thank God for having given me such a child,' she continued with tears in her eyes.

'Does he often write to you?' I asked.

'Seldom, my dear: perhaps once a year. Only when he sends the money, not otherwise. He says, "If I don't write to you, mother, that means I am alive and well. Should anything befall me, which God forbid, they'll tell you without me."''

When I handed his mother's present to the captain (it was in my own quarters) he asked for a bit of paper, carefully wrapped it up, and then put it away. I told him many things about his mother's life. He remained silent, and when I had finished speaking he went to a corner of the room and busied himself for what seemed a long time, filling his pipe.

'Yes, she's a splendid old woman!' he said from there in a rather muffled voice. 'Will God ever let me see her again?'

These simple words expressed much love and sadness.

'Why do you serve here?' I asked.

'One has to serve,' he answered with conviction.

['You should transfer to Russia. You would then be nearer to her.'

'To Russia? To Russia?' repeated the captain, dubiously swaying his head and smiling mournfully. 'Here I am still of some use, but there I should be the least of the officers. And besides, the double pay we get here also means something to a poor man.'

'Can it be, Pável Ivánovich, that living as you do the ordinary pay would not suffice?'

'And does the double pay suffice?' interjected the captain. 'Look at our officers! Have any of them a brass farthing? They all go on tick at the sutler's, and are all up to their ears in debt. You say "living as I do". . . . Do you really think that living as I do I have anything over out of my salary? Not a farthing! You don't yet know what prices are like here; everything is three times dearer. . . .']

The captain lived economically, did not play cards, rarely went carousing, and smoked the cheapest tobacco (which for some reason he called home-grown tobacco). I had liked him before—he had one of those simple, calm, Russian faces which are easy and pleasant to look straight in the eyes—and after this talk I felt a sincere regard for him.

CHAPTER II

NEXT morning at four o'clock the captain came for me. He wore an old threadbare coat without epaulettes, wide Caucasian trousers, a white sheepskin cap the wool of which had grown yellow and limp, and had a shabby Asiatic sword strapped round his shoulder. The small white horse he rode ambled along with short strides, hanging its head down and swinging its thin tail. Although the worthy captain's figure was not very martial or even good-looking, it expressed such equanimity towards everything around him that it involuntarily inspired respect.

I did not keep him waiting a single moment, but mounted my horse at once, and we rode together through the gates of the fort.

The battalion was some five hundred yards ahead of us and looked like a dense, oscillating, black mass. It was only possible to guess that it was an infantry battalion by the bayonets which looked like needles standing close together, and by the sound of the soldiers' songs which occasionally reached us, the beating of a drum, and the delightful voice of the Sixth Company's second tenor, which had often charmed me at the fort. The road lay along the middle of a deep and broad ravine by the side of a stream which had overflowed its banks. Flocks of wild pigeons whirled above it, now alighting on the rocky banks, now turning in the air in rapid circles and vanishing out of sight. The sun was not yet

visible, but the crest of the right side of the ravine was just beginning to be lit up. The grey and whitish rock, the yellowish-green moss, the dew-covered bushes of Christ's Thorn, dogberry, and dwarf elm, appeared extraordinarily distinct and salient in the golden morning light, but the other side and the valley, wrapped in thick mist which floated in uneven layers, were damp and gloomy and presented an indefinite mingling of colours: pale purple, almost black, dark green, and white. Right in front of us, strikingly distinct against the dark-blue horizon, rose the bright, dead-white masses of the snowy mountains, with their shadows and outlines fantastic and yet exquisite in every detail. Crickets, grasshoppers, and thousands of other insects, awoke in the tall grasses and filled the air with their clear and ceaseless sounds: it was as if innumerable tiny bells were ringing inside our very ears. The air was full of the scent of water, grass, and mist: the scent of a lovely early summer morning. The captain struck a light and lit his pipe, and the smell of his cheap tobacco and of the tinder seemed to me extraordinarily pleasant.

To overtake the infantry more quickly we left the road. The captain appeared more thoughtful than usual, did not take his Daghestan pipe from his mouth, and at every step touched with his heels his horse, which swaying from side to side left a scarcely perceptible green track in the tall wet grass. From under its very feet, with the cry and the whirr of wings which involuntarily sends a thrill through every sportsman, a pheasant rose, and flew slowly upwards. The captain did not take the least notice of it.

We had nearly overtaken the battalion when we heard the thud of a horse galloping behind us, and that same moment a good-looking youth in an officer's uniform and white sheepskin cap galloped past us. He smiled in passing, nodded to the captain, and flourished his whip. I only had time to notice that he

sat his horse and held his reins with peculiar grace, that he had beautiful black eyes, a fine nose, and only the first indications of a moustache. What specially pleased me about him was that he could not repress a smile when he noticed our admiration. This smile alone showed him to be very young.

'Where is he galloping to?' muttered the captain with a dissatisfied air, without taking the pipe from his mouth.

'Who is he?' I replied.

'Ensign Aláin, a subaltern in my company. He came from the Cadet Corps only a month ago.'

'I suppose he is going into action for the first time,' I said.

'That's why he is so delighted,' answered the captain, thoughtfully shaking his head. 'Youth!'

'But how could he help being pleased? I can fancy how interesting it must be for a young officer.'

The captain remained silent for a minute or two.

'That is just why I say "youth",' he added in a deep voice. 'What is there to be pleased at without ever having seen the thing? When one has seen it many times one is not so pleased. There are now, let us say, twenty of us officers here: one or other is sure to be killed or wounded, that is quite certain. To-day it may be I, to-morrow he, the next day a third. So what is there to be pleased about?'

CHAPTER III

As soon as the bright sun appeared above the hill and lit up the valley along which we were marching, the wavy clouds of mist cleared and it grew hot. The soldiers, with muskets and sacks on their shoulders, marched slowly along the dusty road. Now and then Ukrainian words and laughter could be heard in their ranks. Several old soldiers in white blouses (most of them non-commissioned officers) walked together by

the roadside, smoking their pipes and conversing gravely. Heavily laden wagons drawn by three horses moved steadily along, raising thick clouds of dust that hung motionless in the air. The officers rode in front: some of them caracoled—whipping their horses, making them take three or four leaps and then, pulling their heads round, stopping abruptly. Others were occupied with the singers, who in spite of the heat and sultriness sang song after song.

With the mounted Tartars, about two hundred yards ahead of the infantry, rode a tall handsome lieutenant in Asiatic costume on a large white horse. He was known in the regiment as a desperate dare-devil who would spit the truth out at anybody. He wore a black tunic trimmed with gold braid, leggings to match, soft closely fitting gold-braided oriental shoes, a yellow coat and a tall sheepskin cap pushed back from his forehead. Fastened to the silver strap that lay across his chest and back, he carried a powder-flask, and a pistol behind him. Another pistol and a silver-mounted dagger hung from his girdle, and above these a sword in a red leather sheath, and a musket in a black cover, were slung over his shoulder. By his clothing, by the way he sat his horse, by his general bearing, in fact by his every movement, one could see that he tried to resemble a Tartar. He even spoke to the Tartars with whom he was riding in a language I did not know, and from the bewildered and amused looks with which they glanced at one another I surmised that they did not understand him either. He was one of our young officers, dare-devil braves who shape their lives on the model of Lérmon-tov's and Marlinsky's heroes. These officers see the Caucasus only through the prism of such books as *A Hero of our Time*, and *Mullah-Nur*,¹ and are guided in their actions not by their own inclinations but by the examples of their models.

¹ Novels by the above-mentioned authors.

The lieutenant, for instance, may perhaps have liked the company of well-bred women and men of rank: generals, colonels, and aides-de-camp (it is even my conviction that he liked such society very much, for he was exceedingly ambitious), but he considered it his imperative duty to turn his roughest side to all important men, though he was strictly moderate in his rudeness to them; and when any lady came to the fort he considered it his duty to walk before her window with his bosom friends, in a red shirt and with slippers on his bare feet, and shout and swear at the top of his voice. But all this he did not so much with the intention of offending her as to let her see what beautiful white feet he had, and how easy it would be to fall in love with him should he desire it. Or he would often go with two or three friendly Tartars to the hills at night to lie in ambush by the roadside to watch for passing hostile Tartars and kill them: and though his heart told him more than once that there was nothing valiant in this, he considered himself bound to cause suffering to people with whom he affected to be disillusioned and whom he chose to hate and despise. He always carried two things: a large icon hanging round his neck, and a dagger which he wore over his shirt even when in bed. He sincerely believed that he had enemies. To persuade himself that he must avenge himself on someone and wash away some insult with blood was his greatest enjoyment. He was convinced that hatred, vengeance, and contempt for the human race were the noblest and most poetic of emotions. But his mistress (a Circassian of course) whom I happened to meet subsequently, used to say that he was the kindest and mildest of men, and that every evening he wrote down his dismal thoughts in his diary, as well as his accounts on ruled paper, and prayed to God on his knees. And how much he suffered merely to appear in his own eyes what he wished to be! For his comrades and the

soldiers could never see him as he wished to appear. Once on one of his nocturnal expeditions on the road with his bosom friends he happened to wound a hostile Chechen with a bullet in the leg, and took him prisoner. After that the Chechen lived for seven weeks with the lieutenant, who attended to him and nursed him as he would have nursed his dearest friend, and when the Chechen recovered he gave him presents and set him free. After that, during one of our expeditions when the lieutenant was retreating with the soldiers of the cordon and firing to keep back the foe, he heard someone among the enemy call him by name, and the man he had wounded rode forward and made signs to the lieutenant to do the same. The lieutenant rode up to his friend and pressed his hand. The hillsmen stood some way back and did not fire, but scarcely had the lieutenant turned his horse to return before several men shot at him and a bullet grazed the small of his back. Another time, at night, when a fire had broken out in the fort and two companies of soldiers were putting it out, I myself saw how the tall figure of a man mounted on a black horse and lit up by the red glow of the fire suddenly appeared among the crowd and, pushing through, rode up to the very flames. When quite close the lieutenant jumped from his horse and rushed into the house, one side of which was burning. Five minutes later he came out with singed hair and scorched elbow, carrying in his bosom two pigeons he had rescued from the flames.

His name was Rosenkranz, yet he often spoke of his descent, deducing it somehow from the Varángians (the first rulers of Russia), and clearly demonstrated that he and his ancestors were pure Russians.

CHAPTER IV

THE sun had done half its journey, and cast its hot rays through the glowing air onto the dry earth. The dark blue sky was perfectly clear, and only the base of the snowy mountains began to clothe itself in lilac-tinged white clouds. The motionless air seemed full of transparent dust, the heat was becoming unbearable.

Half-way on their march the troops reached a small stream and halted. The soldiers stacked their muskets and rushed to the stream; the commander of the battalion sat down in the shade on a drum, his full face assuming the correct expression denoting the greatness of his rank. He, together with some other officers, prepared to have a snack. The captain lay down on the grass under his company's wagon. The brave Lieutenant Rosenkranz and some other young officers disposed themselves on their outspread cloaks and got ready for a drinking-bout, as could be gathered from the bottles and flasks arranged round them, as well as from the peculiar animation of the singers who, standing before them in a semicircle, sang a Caucasian dance-song with a whistling obbligato interjected:

Shamyl, he began to riot
In the days gone by,
'Try-ry-rataty,
In the days gone by!

Among these officers was the young ensign who had overtaken us in the morning. He was very amusing: his eyes shone, he spoke rather thickly, and he wished to kiss and declare his love to everyone. Poor boy! He did not know that he might appear funny in such a situation, that the frankness and tenderness with which he assailed every one predisposed them not to the affection he so longed for, but to ridicule; nor did he know that when, quite heated, he at last threw himself down on the cloak and rested on his elbow

with his thick black hair thrown back, he looked uncommonly charming.

[In a word, everyone was cheerful, except perhaps one officer who, sitting under his company's cart, had lost the horse he was riding to another officer at cards and had agreed to hand it over when they reached head-quarters. He was vainly trying to induce the other to play again, offering to stake a casket which everyone could confirm he had bought for thirty rubles from a Jew, but which—merely because he was in difficulties—he was now willing to stake for fifteen. His opponent looked casually into the distance and persistently remained silent, till at last he remarked that he was terribly anxious to have a doze.]

I confess that from the time I started from the fort and decided to take part in this action, gloomy reflections involuntarily rose in my mind, and so—since one has a tendency to judge of others by oneself—I listened with curiosity to the conversation of the soldiers and officers and attentively watched the expression of their faces, but could find absolutely no trace of the anxiety I myself experienced: jokes, laughter and anecdotes, gambling and drunkenness, expressed the general carelessness and indifference to the impending danger [as if all these people had long ago finished their affairs in this world. What was this—firmness, habituation to danger, or carelessness and indifference to life? Or was it all these things together as well as others I did not know, forming a complex but powerful moral motive of human nature termed *esprit de corps*—a subtle code embracing within itself a general expression of all the virtues and vices of men banded together in any permanent condition, a code each new member involuntarily submits to un murmuringly and which does not change with the individuals, since whoever they may be the sum total of human tendencies everywhere and always remains the same?]

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS seven that evening, dusty and tired, we entered the wide fortified gate of Fort M. The sun was already setting and threw its rosy slanting rays on the picturesque little batteries, on the gardens with their tall poplars which surrounded the fortress, on the yellow gleaming cultivated fields, and on the white clouds that crowding round the snowy peaks had, as if trying to imitate them, formed a range not less fantastic and beautiful. On the horizon the new moon appeared delicate as a little cloud. In the Tartar village, from the roof of a hut, a Tartar was calling the faithful to prayer, and our singers raised their voices with renewed energy and vigour.

After a rest and after tidying myself up a bit, I went to an adjutant of my acquaintance to ask him to let the general know of my intention. On my way from the suburb where I had put up I noticed in Fort M. something I did not at all expect: a pretty little brougham overtook me, in which I caught sight of a fashionable bonnet and from which I overheard some French words. The sounds of some 'Lizzie' or 'Kátenka' polka, played on a bad ramshackle piano, reached me through the windows of the commander's house. In a little grocery and wine shop which I passed, some clerks with cigarettes in their fingers sat drinking wine, and I heard one of them say to another, 'No, excuse me, as to politics, Mary Gregórevna is first of our ladies.' A Jew in a worn-out coat, with a bent back and sickly countenance, was dragging along a wheezy barrel-organ and the whole suburb resounded to the tones of the finale of 'Lucia'. Two women in rustling dresses with silk kerchiefs on their heads and carrying bright-coloured parasols passed by along the planks that did duty for a pavement. Two girls, one in a pink, the other in a blue dress, stood bareheaded beside the earth-embankments of

a low-roofed house, and shrieked with high-pitched, forced laughter, evidently to attract the attention of passing officers. Officers, dressed in new uniforms with glittering epaulettes and white gloves, flaunted along the street and on the boulevard.

I found my acquaintance on the ground floor of the general's house. I had scarcely had time to explain my wish to him and to get his reply that it could easily be fulfilled, when the pretty little brougham I had noticed outside rattled past the window we were sitting at. A tall, well-built man in an infantry major's uniform and epaulettes got out and entered the house.

'Oh, please excuse me,' said the adjutant, rising. 'I must go and announce them to the general.'

'Who is it?' I asked.

'The countess,' he replied, and buttoning his uniform he rushed upstairs.

A few minutes later a very handsome man in a frock coat without epaulettes and with a white cross in his buttonhole went out into the porch. He was not tall but remarkably good-looking. He was followed by the major, an adjutant, and a couple of other officers. The general's gait, voice, and all his movements, showed him to be a man well aware of his own value.

'*Bonsoir, madame la comtesse,*'¹ he said, offering his hand through the carriage window.

A small hand in a kid glove pressed his, and a pretty smiling face in a yellow bonnet appeared at the carriage window.

Of the conversation which lasted several minutes I only overheard the general say laughingly as I passed by:

'*Vous savez que j'ai fait vœu de combattre les infidèles; prenez donc garde de la devenir.*'²

¹ 'Good evening, Countess.'

² 'You know I have sworn to fight the infidels (the unfaithful), so beware of becoming one.'

A laugh replied from inside the carriage.

'*Adieu donc, cher général!*'¹

'*Non, au revoir,*' said the general, ascending the steps of the porch. '*N'oubliez pas, que je m'invite pour la soirée de demain.*'²

The carriage rattled off [and the general went into the sitting-room with the major. Passing by the open window of the adjutant's room, he noticed my un-uniformed figure and turned his kind attention to me. Having heard my request he announced his complete agreement with it and passed on into his room.]

'There again,' I thought as I walked home, 'is a man who possesses all that Russians strive after: rank, riches, distinction; and this man, the day before an engagement the outcome of which is known only to God, jokes with a pretty woman and promises to have tea with her next day, just as if they had met at a ball!'

[I remembered a reflection I had heard a Tartar utter, to the effect that only a pauper can be brave. '*Become rich, become a coward,*' said he, not at all to offend his comrade but as a common and unquestionable rule. But the general could lose, together with his life, much more than anyone else I had had an opportunity of observing and, contrary to the Tartar's rule, no one had shown such a pleasant, graceful indifference and confidence as he. My conceptions of courage became completely confused.]

At that same adjutant's I met a young man who surprised me even more. He was a young lieutenant of the K. regiment who was noted for his almost feminine meekness and timidity and who had come to the adjutant to pour out his vexation and resentment against those who, he said, had intrigued against him to keep him from taking part in the impending

¹ 'Good-bye then, dear general.'

² 'No, *au revoir*. Don't forget that I am inviting myself for to-morrow's *soirée*.'

action. He said it was mean to behave in that way, that it was unfriendly, that he would not forget it, and so forth. Intently as I watched the expression of his face and listened to the sound of his voice, I could not help feeling convinced that he was not pretending but was genuinely filled with indignation and grief at not being allowed to go and shoot Circassians and expose himself to their fire. He was grieving like a little child who has been unjustly birched . . . I could make nothing at all of it.

CHAPTER VI

THE troops were to start at ten in the evening. At half-past eight I mounted and rode to the general's, but thinking that he and his adjutant were busy I tied my horse to the fence and sat down on an earth-bank intending to catch the general when he came out.

The heat and glare of the sun were now replaced by the coolness of night and the soft light of the young moon, which had formed a pale glimmering semi-circle around itself on the deep blue of the starry sky and was already setting. Lights appeared in the windows of the houses and shone through cracks in the shutters of the earth huts. The stately poplars, beyond the white moonlit earth huts with their rush-thatched roofs, looked darker and taller than ever against the horizon.

The long shadows of the houses, the trees, and the fences, stretched out daintily on the dusty road. . . . From the river came the ringing voices of frogs;¹ along the street came the sound of hurried steps and voices talking, or the gallop of a horse, and from the suburb the tones of a barrel-organ playing now 'The winds are blowing', now some 'Aurora Waltz'.

I will not say in what meditations I was absorbed:

¹ Frogs in the Caucasus make a noise quite different from the croaking of frogs elsewhere. L. T.

first, because I should be ashamed to confess the gloomy waves of thought that insistently flooded my soul while around me I noticed nothing but gaiety and joy, and secondly, because it would not suit my story. I was so absorbed in thought that I did not even notice the bell strike eleven and the general with his suite ride past me.

[Hastily mounting my horse I set out to overtake the detachment.]

The rear-guard was still within the gates of the fort. I had great difficulty in making my way across the bridge among the guns, ammunition wagons, carts of different companies, and officers noisily giving orders. Once outside the gates I trotted past the troops who, stretching out over nearly three-quarters of a mile, were silently moving on amid the darkness, and I overtook the general. As I rode past the guns drawn out in single file, and the officers who rode between them, I was hurt as by a discord in the quiet and solemn harmony by the German accents of a voice shouting, 'A linstock, you devil!' and the voice of a soldier hurriedly exclaiming, 'Shévchenko, the lieutenant wants a light!'

The greater part of the sky was now overcast by long strips of dark grey clouds; it was only here and there that a few stars twinkled dimly among them. The moon had already sunk behind the near horizon of the black hills visible to the right and threw a faint trembling light on their peaks, in sharp contrast to the impenetrable darkness enveloping their base. The air was so warm and still that it seemed as if not a single blade of grass, not a single cloudlet, was moving. It was so dark that even objects close at hand could not be distinguished. By the sides of the road I seemed to see now rocks, now animals, now some strange kind of men, and I discovered that they were merely bushes only when I heard them rustle, or felt the dew with which they were sprinkled.

Before me I saw a dense heaving wall followed by some dark moving spots; this was the cavalry vanguard and the general with his suite. Another similar dark mass, only lower, moved beside us; this was the infantry.

The silence that reigned over the whole division was so great that all the mingling sounds of night with their mysterious charm were distinctly audible: the far-off mournful howling of jackals, now like agonized weeping, now like chuckling; the monotonous resounding song of crickets, frogs, and quails; a sort of rumbling I could not at all account for but which seemed to draw nearer; and all those scarcely audible motions of Nature which can neither be understood nor defined, mingled into one beautiful harmony which we call the stillness of night. This stillness was interrupted by, or rather combined with, the dull thud of hoofs and the rustling of the tall grass caused by the slowly advancing detachment.

Only very occasionally could the clang of a heavy gun, the sound of bayonets touching one another, hushed voices, or the snorting of a horse, be heard. [By the scent of the wet juicy grass which sank under our horses' feet, by the light steam rising from the ground and by the horizons seen on two sides of us, it was evident that we were moving across a wide, luxuriant meadow.] Nature seemed to breathe with pacifying beauty and power.

Can it be that there is not room for all men on this beautiful earth under those immeasurable starry heavens? Can it be possible that in the midst of this entrancing Nature feelings of hatred, vengeance, or the desire to exterminate their fellows, can endure in the souls of men? All that is unkind in the hearts of men should, one would think, vanish at contact with Nature—that most direct expression of beauty and goodness.

[War! What an incomprehensible phenomenon!

When one's reason asks: 'Is it just, is it necessary?' an inner voice always replies 'No'. Only the persistence of this unnatural occurrence makes it seem natural, and a feeling of self-preservation makes it seem just.

Who will doubt that in the war of the Russians against the mountain-tribes, justice—resulting from a feeling of self-preservation—is on our side? Were it not for this war, what would secure the neighbouring rich and cultured Russian territories from robbery, murder, and raids by wild and warlike tribes? But consider two private persons. On whose side is the feeling of self-preservation and consequently of justice? Is it on the side of this ragamuffin—some Djemi or other—who hearing of the approach of the Russians snatches down his old gun from the wall, puts three or four charges (which he will only reluctantly discharge) in his pouch and runs to meet the giaours, and on seeing that the Russians still advance, approaching the fields he has sown which they will tread down and his hut which they will burn, and the ravine where his mother, his wife, and his children have hidden themselves, shaking with fear—seeing that he will be deprived of all that constitutes his happiness—in impotent anger and with a cry of despair tears off his tattered jacket, flings down his gun, and drawing his sheepskin cap over his eyes sings his death-song and flings himself headlong onto the Russian bayonets with only a dagger in his hand? Is justice on his side or on that of this officer on the general's staff who is singing French chansonettes so well just as he rides past us? He has a family in Russia, relations, friends, serfs, and obligations towards them, but has no reason or desire to be at enmity with the hillsmen, and has come to the Caucasus just by chance and to show his courage. Or is it on the side of my acquaintance the adjutant, who only wishes to obtain a captaincy and a comfortable position as soon as possible and for that reason has become the hillsmen's enemy? Or is

it on the side of this young German who, with a strong German accent, is demanding a linstock from the artillerymen? What devil has brought him from his fatherland and set him down in this distant region? Why should this Saxon, Kaspar Lavréntich, mix himself up in our blood-thirsty conflict with these turbulent neighbours?]

CHAPTER VII

WE had been riding for more than two hours. I was beginning to shiver and feel drowsy. Through the gloom I still seemed to see the same indefinite forms: a little way in front the same black wall and the moving spots. Close in front of me I could see the crupper of a white horse which swung its tail and threw its hind legs wide apart, the back of a white Circassian coat on which could be discerned a musket in a black case, and the glimmering butt of a pistol in an embroidered holster; the glow of a cigarette lit up a fair moustache, a beaver collar and a hand in a chamois glove. Every now and then I leant over my horse's neck, shutting my eyes and forgetting myself for a few minutes, then startled by the familiar tramping and rustling I glanced round, and felt as if I were standing still and the black wall in front was moving towards me, or that it had stopped and I should in a moment ride into it. At one such moment the rumbling which increased and seemed to approach, and the cause of which I could not guess, struck me forcibly: it was the sound of water. We were entering a deep gorge and approaching a mountain-stream that was overflowing its banks.¹ The rumbling increased, the damp grass became thicker and taller and the bushes closer, while the horizon gradually narrowed. Now and then bright lights appeared here

¹ In the Caucasus rivers are apt to overflow in July.
L. T.

and there against the dark background of the hills, and vanished instantly.

'Tell me, please, what are those lights?' I asked in a whisper of a Tartar riding beside me.

'Don't you know?' he replied.

'No.'

'The hillsmen have tied straw to poles and are waving it about alight.'

'Why are they doing that?'

'So that everyone should know that the Russians have come. Oh, oh! What a bustle is going on now in the *aouls*! Everybody's dragging his belongings into the ravine,' he said laughing.

'Why, do they already know in the mountains that a detachment is on its way?' I asked him.

'How can they help knowing? They always know. Our people are like that.'

'Then Shamyl¹ too is preparing for action?' I asked.

'No,' he answered, shaking his head, 'Shamyl won't go into action; Shamyl will send his *naibs*,² and he himself will look on through a telescope from above.'

'Does he live far away?'

'Not far. Some eight miles to the left.'

'How do you know?' I asked. 'Have you been there?'

'I have. Our people have all been.'

'Have you seen Shamyl?'

'Such as we don't see Shamyl! There are a hundred, three hundred, a thousand *murids*³ all round him, and Shamyl is in the centre,' he said, with an expression of servile admiration.

Looking up, it was possible to discern that the sky,

¹ Shamyl was the leader (in 1834-59) of the Caucasian hill-tribes in their resistance to Russia.

² A *naib* was a man to whom Shamyl had entrusted some administrative office. L. T.

³ The word *murid* has several meanings, but here it denotes something between an adjutant and a bodyguard.

now cleared, was beginning to grow lighter in the east and the pleiades to sink towards the horizon, but the ravine through which we were marching was still damp and gloomy.

Suddenly a little way in front of us several lights flashed through the darkness; at the same moment some bullets flew whizzing past amid the surrounding silence [and sharp abrupt firing could be heard and loud cries, as piercing as cries of despair but expressing instead of fear such a passion of brutal audacity and rage that one could not but shudder at hearing it.] It was the enemy's advanced picket. The Tartars who composed it whooped, fired at random, and then ran in different directions.

All became silent again. The general called up an interpreter. A Tartar in a white Circassian coat rode up to him and, gesticulating and whispering, talked with him for some time.

'Colonel Khasánov! Order the cordon to take open order,' commanded the general with a quiet but distinct drawl.

The detachment advanced to the river, the black hills and gorges were left behind, the dawn appeared. The vault of the heavens, in which a few pale stars were still dimly visible, seemed higher; the sunrise glow beyond shone brightly in the east, a fresh penetrating breeze blew from the west and the white mists rose like steam above the rushing stream.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR guide pointed out a ford and the cavalry vanguard, followed by the general, began crossing the stream. The water which reached to the horses' chests rushed with tremendous force between the white boulders which here and there appeared on a level with its surface, and formed foaming and gurgling ripples round the horses' legs. The horses,

surprised by the noise of the water, lifted their heads and pricked their ears, but stepped evenly and carefully against the current on the uneven bottom of the stream. Their riders lifted their feet and their weapons. The infantry, literally in nothing but their shirts, linked arm in arm by twenties and holding above the water their muskets to which their bundles of clothing were fastened, made great efforts (as the strained expression of their faces showed) to resist the force of the current. The mounted artillerymen with loud shouts drove their horses into the water at a trot. The guns and green ammunition wagons, over which the water occasionally splashed, rang against the stony bottom, but the sturdy little horses, churning the water, pulled at the traces in unison and with dripping manes and tails clambered out on the opposite bank.

As soon as the crossing was accomplished the general's face suddenly assumed a meditative and serious look and he turned his horse and, followed by the cavalry, rode at a trot down a broad glade which opened out before us in the midst of the forest. A cordon of mounted Cossacks was scattered along the skirts of the forest.

In the woods we noticed a man on foot dressed in a Circassian coat and wearing a tall cap—then a second and a third. One of the officers said: 'Those are Tartars.' Then a puff of smoke appeared from behind a tree, a shot, and another. . . . Our rapid fire drowns the enemy's. Only now and then a bullet, with a slow sound like the buzzing of a bee's wings, passes by and proves that the firing is not all ours. Now the infantry at a run and the guns at a trot pass into the cordon. You can hear the boom of the guns, the metallic sounds of flying grape-shot, the hissing of rockets, and the crackle of musketry. Over the wide glade on all sides you can see cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Puffs of smoke mingle with the dew-covered

verdure and the mist. Colonel Khasánov, approaching the general at full gallop, suddenly reins in his horse.

'Your Excellency, shall we order the cavalry to charge?' he says, raising his hand to his cap. 'The enemy's colours¹ are in sight,' and he points with his whip to some mounted Tartars in front of whom ride two men on white horses with bits of blue and red stuff fastened to poles in their hands.

'Go, and God be with you, Iván Mikháylovich!' says the general.

The colonel turns his horse sharply round, draws his sword, and shouts 'Hurrah!'

'Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!' comes from the ranks, and the cavalry gallop after him. . . .

Everyone looks on with interest: there is a colour, another, a third and a fourth. . . .

The enemy, not waiting for the attack, hides in the wood and thence opens a small-arms fire. Bullets come flying more and more frequently.

'*Quel charmant coup d'œil!*'² says the general, rising slightly, English fashion, in his saddle on his slim-legged black horse.

'*Charmant!*' answers the major, rolling his r's, and striking his horse he rides up to the general: '*C'est un vrai plaisir que la guerre dans un aussi beau pays,*'³ he says.

'*Et surtout en bonne compagnie,*'⁴ replies the general with a pleasant smile.

The major bows.

At that moment a hostile cannon-ball flies past with a disagreeable whiz, and strikes something. We hear behind us the moan of a wounded man.

¹ The colours among the hillsmen correspond to those of our troops, except that every *dzhigit* or 'brave' among them may make his own colours and carry them. L. T.

² 'What a charming view.'

³ 'Charming . . . War in such beautiful country is a real pleasure.'

⁴ 'Especially in good company.'

This moaning strikes me so strangely that the war-like scene instantly loses all its charm for me. But no one except myself seems to notice it: the major laughs with apparently greater gusto, another officer repeats with perfect calm the first words of a sentence he had just been saying, the general looks the other way and with the quietest smile says something in French.

'Shall we reply to their fire?' asks the commander of the artillery, galloping up.

'Yes, frighten them a bit!' carelessly replies the general, lighting a cigar.

The battery takes up its position and the firing begins. The earth groans under the shots, the discharges flash out incessantly, and smoke, through which it is scarcely possible to distinguish the artillerymen moving round their guns, veils your sight.

The *aoul* has been bombarded. Colonel Khasánov rides up again, and at the general's command gallops towards the *aoul*. The war-cry is again heard and the cavalry disappears in the cloud of dust it has raised.

The spectacle was truly magnificent. The one thing that spoilt the general impression for me—who took no part in the affair and was unaccustomed to it—was that this movement and the animation and the shouting appeared unnecessary. The comparison involuntarily suggested itself to me of a man swinging his arms vigorously to cut the air with an axe

CHAPTER IX

OUR troops had taken possession of the village and not a single soul of the enemy remained in it when the general and his suite, to which I had attached myself, rode up to it.

The long clean huts, with their flat earthen roofs and shapely chimneys, stood on irregular stony mounds between which flowed a small stream. On one side were green gardens with enormous pear and

small plum trees brightly lit up by the sun, on the other strange upright shadows, the perpendicular stones of the cemetery, and long poles with balls and many-coloured flags fastened to their ends. (These marked the graves of *dzhigits*.)

The troops were drawn up outside the gates.

['Well, how about it, Colonel?' said the general. 'Let them loot. I see they are terribly anxious to,' he added with a smile, pointing at the Cossacks.

You cannot imagine how striking was the contrast between the carelessness with which the general uttered these words, and their import and the military surroundings.]

A moment later, dragoons, Cossacks, and infantry spread with evident delight through the crooked lanes and in an instant the empty village was animated again. Here a roof crashes, an axe rings against the hard wood of a door that is being forced open, here a stack of hay, a fence, a hut, is set on fire and a pillar of thick smoke rises up in the clear air. Here is a Cossack dragging along a sack of flour and a carpet, there a soldier, with a delighted look on his face, brings a tin basin and some rag out of a hut, another is trying with outstretched arms to catch two hens that struggle and cackle beside a fence, a third has somewhere discovered an enormous pot of milk and after drinking some of it throws the rest on the ground with a loud laugh.

The battalion with which I had come from Fort N. was also in the *aoul*. The captain sat on the roof of a hut and sent thin whiffs of cheap tobacco smoke through his short pipe with such an expression of indifference on his face that on seeing him I forgot that I was in a hostile *aoul* and felt quite at home.

'Ah, you are here too?' he said when he noticed me.

The tall figure of Lieutenant Rosenkranz flitted here and there in the village. He gave orders unceasingly and appeared exceedingly engrossed in his

task. I saw him with a triumphant air emerge from a hut followed by two soldiers leading an old Tartar. The old man, whose only clothing consisted of a mottled tunic all in rags and patchwork trousers, was so frail that his arms, tightly bound behind his bent back, seemed scarcely to hold onto his shoulders, and he could scarcely drag his bare crooked legs along. His face and even part of his shaven head were deeply furrowed. His wry toothless mouth kept moving beneath his close-cut moustache and beard, as if he were chewing something; but a gleam still sparkled in his red lashless eyes which clearly expressed an old man's indifference to life.

Rosenkranz asked him, through an interpreter, why he had not gone away with the others.

'Where should I go?' he answered, looking quietly away.

'Where the others have gone,' someone remarked.

'The *dzhigits* have gone to fight the Russians, but I am an old man.'

'Are you not afraid of the Russians?'

'What will the Russians do to me? I am old,' he repeated, again glancing carelessly round the circle that had formed about him.

Later, as I was returning, I saw that old man bare-headed, with his arms tied, being jolted along behind the saddle of a Cossack, and he was looking round with the same expression of indifference on his face. He was needed for the exchange of prisoners.

I climbed onto the roof and sat down beside the captain.

[A bugler who had vodka and provisions was sent for. The captain's calmness and equanimity involuntarily produced an effect on me. We ate roasted pheasant and chatted, without at all reflecting that the owners of that hut had not merely no desire to see us there but could hardly have imagined our existence.]

'There don't seem to have been many of the enemy,'

I said, wishing to know his opinion of the action that had taken place.

'The enemy?' he repeated with surprise. 'The enemy was not there at all! Do you call those the enemy? . . . Wait till the evening when we go back, and you will see how they will speed us on our way: what a lot of them will pour out from there,' he said, pointing to a thicket we had passed in the morning.

'What is that?' I asked anxiously, interrupting the captain and pointing to a group of Don Cossacks who had collected round something not far from us.

A sound of something like a child's cry came from there, and the words:

'Stop . . . don't hack it . . . you'll be seen . . . Have you a knife, Evstignéich . . . Lend me a knife. . . .'

'They are up to something, the scoundrels . . . ' replied the captain calmly.

But at that moment the young ensign, his comely face flushed and frightened, came suddenly running from behind a corner and rushed towards the Cossacks waving his arms.

'Don't touch it! Don't kill it!' he cried in a childish voice.

Seeing the officer, the Cossacks stepped apart and released a little white kid. The young ensign was quite abashed, muttered something, and stopped before us with a confused face. Seeing the captain and me on the roof he blushed still more and ran leaping towards us.

'I thought they were killing a child,' he said with a bashful smile.

CHAPTER X

THE general went ahead with the cavalry. The battalion with which I had come from Fort N. remained in the rear-guard. Captain Khlópov's and Lieutenant Rosenkranz's battalions retired together.

The captain's prediction was fully justified. No

sooner had we entered the narrow thicket he had mentioned, than on both sides of us we caught glimpses of hillsmen mounted and on foot, and so near were they that I could distinctly see how some of them ran stooping, rifle in hand, from one tree to another.

The captain took off his cap and piously crossed himself, some of the older soldiers did the same. From the wood were heard war-cries and the words '*Iay giaour*', '*Urus! iay!*' Sharp short rifle-shots, following one another fast, whizzed on both sides of us. Our men answered silently with a running fire, and only now and then remarks like the following were made in the ranks: 'See where *he*¹ fires from! It's all right for him inside the wood. We ought to use cannon,' and so forth.

Our ordnance was brought out, and after some grape-shot had been fired the enemy seemed to grow weaker, but a moment later and at every step taken by our troops, the enemy's fire again grew hotter and the shouting louder.

We had hardly gone seven hundred yards from the village before enemy cannon-balls began whistling over our heads. I saw a soldier killed by one. . . . But why should I describe the details of that terrible picture which I would myself give much to be able to forget!

Lieutenant Rosenkranz kept firing, and incessantly shouted in a hoarse voice at the soldiers and galloped from one end of the cordon to the other. He was rather pale and this suited his martial countenance very well.

The good-looking young ensign was in raptures: his beautiful dark eyes shone with daring, his lips were slightly smiling, and he kept riding up to the captain and begging permission to charge.

¹ *He* is a collective noun by which the soldiers indicate the enemy. L. T.

'We will repel them,' he said persuasively, 'we certainly will.'

'It's not necessary,' replied the captain abruptly. 'We must retreat.'

The captain's company held the skirts of the wood, the men lying down and replying to the enemy's fire. The captain in his shabby coat and shabby cap sat silent on his white horse, with loose reins, bent knees, his feet in the stirrups, and did not stir from his place. (The soldiers knew and did their work so well that there was no need to give them any orders.) Only at rare intervals he raised his voice to shout at those who exposed their heads. There was nothing at all martial about the captain's appearance, but there was something so sincere and simple in it that I was unusually struck by it. 'It is he who is really brave,' I involuntarily said to myself.

He was just the same as I had always seen him: the same calm movements, the same guileless expression on his plain but frank face, only his eyes, which were brighter than usual, showed the concentration of one quietly engaged on his duties. 'As I had always seen him' is easily said, but how many different shades have I noticed in the behaviour of others; one wishing to appear quieter, another sterner, a third merrier, than usual, but the captain's face showed that he did not even see why he should appear anything but what he was.

The Frenchman at Waterloo who said, '*La garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas*,'¹ and other, particularly French, heroes who uttered memorable sayings were brave, and really uttered remarkable words, but between their courage and the captain's there was this difference, that even if a great saying had in any circumstance stirred in the soul of my hero, I am convinced that he would not have uttered it: first because by uttering a great saying he would have feared to spoil a great deed, and secondly because

¹ 'The Guard dies, but does not surrender.'

when a man feels within himself the capacity to perform a great deed no talk of any kind is needed. That, I think, is a peculiar and a lofty characteristic of Russian courage, and that being so, how can a Russian heart help aching when our young Russian warriors utter trivial French phrases intended to imitate antiquated French chivalry?

Suddenly from the side where our young ensign stood with his platoon we heard a not very hearty or loud 'Hurrah!' Looking round to where the shout came from, I saw some thirty soldiers with sacks on their shoulders and muskets in their hands managing with very great difficulty to run across a ploughed field. They kept stumbling, but nevertheless ran on and shouted. In front of them, sword in hand, galloped the young ensign.

They all disappeared into the wood. . . .

After a few minutes of whooping and clatter a frightened horse ran out of the wood, and soldiers appeared bringing back the dead and wounded. Among the latter was the young ensign. Two soldiers supported him under his arms. He was as pale as a sheet, and his pretty head, on which only a shadow remained of the warlike enthusiasm that had animated him a few minutes before, was dreadfully sunk between his shoulders and drooped on his chest. There was a small spot of blood on the white shirt beneath his unbuttoned coat.

'Ah, what a pity!' I said, involuntarily turning away from this sad spectacle.

'Of course it's a pity,' said an old soldier, who stood leaning on his musket beside me with a gloomy expression on his face. 'He's not afraid of anything. How can one do such things?' he added, looking intently at the wounded lad. 'He was still foolish and now he has paid for it!'

'And you?' I asked. 'Are you afraid?'

'What do you expect?'

CHAPTER XI

FOUR soldiers were carrying the ensign on a stretcher and behind them an ambulance soldier was leading a thin, broken-winded horse with two green boxes on its back containing surgical appliances. They waited for the doctor. Some officers rode up to the stretcher and tried to cheer and comfort the wounded lad.

'Well, friend Alánin, it will be some time before you will dance again with castanets,' said Lieutenant Rosenkranz, riding up to the stretcher with a smile.

He probably supposed that these words would raise the young ensign's spirits, but as far as one could judge by the latter's coldly sad look the words had not the desired effect.

The captain rode up too. He looked intently at the wounded man and his usually calm and cold face expressed sincere sympathy. 'Well, my dear Anatól Ivánich,' he said, in a voice of tender sympathy such as I never expected from him, 'evidently it was God's will.'

The wounded lad looked round and his pale face lit up with a sad smile. 'Yes, I disobeyed you.'

'Say rather, it was God's will,' repeated the captain.

The doctor when he arrived, [as far as could be judged by the shakiness of his legs and the redness of his eyes, was in no fit condition to bandage the patient: however, he] took from his assistant bandages, a probe, and another instrument, rolled up his sleeves and stepped up to the ensign with an encouraging smile.

'So it seems they have made a hole in a sound spot for you too,' he said in a carelessly playful tone. 'Let me see.'

The ensign obeyed, but the look he gave the merry doctor expressed astonishment and reproof which the inebriated practitioner did not notice. He touched

the wound so awkwardly, quite unnecessarily pressing on it with his unsteady fingers, that the wounded ensign, driven beyond the limits of endurance, pushed away his hand with a deep groan.

'Let me alone!' he said in a scarcely audible voice. 'I shall die anyway.'

[Then, addressing the captain, he said with difficulty: 'Please, Captain . . . yesterday I lost . . . twenty rubles to Drónov. . . . When my things are sold . . . let him be paid.']

With those words he fell back, and five minutes later when I passed the group that had formed around him, and asked a soldier, 'How is the ensign?' the answer was, 'Passing away.'

CHAPTER XII

It was late in the day when the detachment, formed into a broad column and singing, approached the Fort.

[The general rode in front and by his merry countenance one could see that the raid had been successful. In fact, with little loss, we had that day been in Mukay *aoul*—where from immemorial times no Russian foot had trod.

The Saxon, Kaspar Lavréntich, narrated to another officer that he had himself seen how three Chechens had aimed straight at his breast. In the mind of Ensign Rosenkranz a complete story of the day's action had formulated itself. Captain Khlópov walked with thoughtful face in front of his company, leading his little white horse by its bridle.]

The sun had hidden behind the snowy mountain range and threw its last rosy beams on a long thin cloud stretching motionless across the clear horizon. The snow peaks began to disappear in purple mist and only their top outline was visible, wonderfully distinct in the crimson sunset glow. The delicate

moon, which had risen long since, began to grow pale against the deep azure. The green of the grass and trees was turning black and becoming covered with dew. The dark masses of troops moved with measured sounds over the luxuriant meadows. Tambourines, drums, and merry songs were heard from various sides. The voice of the second tenor of the Sixth Company rang out with full force and the sounds of his clear chest-notes, full of feeling and power, floated through the clear evening air.

THE WOOD-FELLING

A CADET'S STORY

THE WOOD-FELLING

A CADET'S STORY

CHAPTER I

IN the middle of the winter of 185— a division of one battery was on service with the detachment operating in that part of the Térek Territory¹ called the Great Chéchnya. On the evening of February 14, knowing that the platoon which I in the absence of any officer was commanding, was to join a column told off to fell wood next day, and having given and received the necessary orders, I retired to my tent earlier than usual. As I had not contracted the bad habit of warming my tent with hot charcoal, I lay down without undressing on my bed, which was supported on stakes driven into the ground, drew my fur cap over my eyes, tucked myself up in my sheepskin cloak, and fell into that peculiar, heavy, and deep sleep which comes at times of anxiety and when one is awaiting danger. The expectation of the next day's affair had this effect on me.

At three next morning, while it was still quite dark, the warm sheepskin was pulled off me and my eyes, heavy with sleep, were unpleasantly struck by the red light of a candle.

'Get up, please,' said a voice. I shut my eyes, unconsciously pulled the sheepskin back over myself, and again fell asleep. 'Get up, please,' said Dmítrý once more, remorselessly shaking me by the shoulder: 'the infantry are starting.' The reality suddenly flashed on my mind, I sat up and jumped to my feet. After hurriedly drinking a glass of tea and washing

¹ The Térek Territory lies to the north-east of the Caucasian Mountains. The Great and Little Chéchnya are districts in the southern part of it.

myself with icy water I crept out of the tent and went to the 'park' (the place where the cannon were). It was dark, misty, and cold. The dim red light of the night-fires, which gleaming here and there in the camp showed up the figures of the sleepy soldiers who lay near them, seemed only to make the darkness more intense.

Near by, quiet regular snoring could be heard, and from farther off, sounds of movements, voices, and the clatter of the muskets of the infantry preparing to start. There was a smell of smoke, manure, torches, and mist; the morning air caused cold shivers to run down one's back, and one's teeth chattered involuntarily.

It was only by the snorting and occasional stamping of the horses harnessed to them that we could tell where the limbers and ammunition wagons stood in the impenetrable darkness; and only the fiery dots of the linstocks showed where the guns were. 'God be with us!' With these words came the clanging sound of the first gun moving, then the noise of the ammunition wagon—and the platoon started. We all took off our caps and crossed ourselves. Having occupied the interval between the infantry companies, the platoon stopped and waited a quarter of an hour for the whole column to collect and for the commander to appear.

'One of our men is missing, Nicholas Petróvich.' With these words a black figure approached me, whom I only knew by the voice to be the gun-sergeant of the platoon, Maksimov.

'Who is it?'

'Velenchúk is missing. He was there all the time they were harnessing—I saw him myself—but now he's gone.'

As the column could not be expected to start at once, we decided to send Corporal Antónov to look for Velenchúk. Directly after that, several horsemen

trotted past us in the dark. They were the commander and his suite; and immediately the head of the column moved and started and so at last did we also, but Antónov and Velenchúk were still absent. We had, however, hardly gone a hundred yards before they both overtook us.

‘Where was he?’ I asked Antónov.

‘Asleep in the “park”.’

‘Why, has he had a drop too much?’

‘Oh, no.’

‘Then how is it he fell asleep?’

‘I can’t make out.’

For about three hours we moved slowly on in silence and darkness over some unploughed fields bare of snow and over low bushes that crackled under the wheels of the gun-carriages. At last, after we had crossed a shallow but extremely rapid stream, we were stopped, and we heard the abrupt reports of *vintóvkas*¹ in the direction of the vanguard.

These sounds as usual had a most exhilarating effect on everyone. The detachment seemed to wake up: sounds of talking, movement, and laughter were heard in the ranks. Here a soldier wrestled with a comrade, there another hopped from foot to foot. Here was one chewing hard-tack, or to while away the time shouldering and grounding arms. Meanwhile the mist began to grow distinctly whiter in the east, the damp became more intense, and the surrounding objects gradually emerged from the gloom. I could already discern the green gun-carriages and ammunition wagons, the brass of the guns covered with moisture by the mist, the familiar figures of my soldiers, every minute detail of which I had involuntarily studied, the bay horses, and the lines of infantry

¹ The *vintóvka* was a long Asiatic rifle used by the Circassians (Cherkésés). When firing, they rested the barrel on a support formed by two thin spiked sticks tied at the top by a strap.

with their bright bayonets, their bags, their raincoats, and the kettles they carried on their backs.

We were soon again moved forward a few hundred yards where there was no road, and then we were shown our position. To the right one could see the steep bank of a winding stream and the high wooden posts of a Tartar cemetery; to the left and in front a black strip was visible through the mist. The platoon unlimbered. The Eighth Company, which covered us, piled their muskets, and a battalion with axes and muskets went to the forest.

Before five minutes were over fires were crackling and smoking in all directions. The soldiers dispersed, blew the fires and stirred them with hands and feet, dragged logs and branches, while the forest resounded with the unceasing noise of hundreds of axes and the crashing of falling trees.

The artillery, with a certain rivalry of the infantry, heaped their pile high, and though it was already burning so that one could hardly come within two paces of it and thick black smoke was rising through the frozen branches, which the soldiers pressed down into the fire (and from which drops fell sizzling into the flames), and though the charcoal was glowing beneath and the grass was scorched all around, the soldiers were not satisfied, but kept throwing great logs on to the pile, feeding it with dry grass beneath and heaping it higher and higher.

When I came up to the fire to smoke a cigarette, Velenchúk, always officious, but to-day feeling guilty and bustling about more than any one, in a fit of zeal snatched a piece of charcoal from the fire with his bare hand and, after tossing it from hand to hand a couple of times, dropped it on the ground.

‘Light a twig and hold it up,’ said a soldier.

‘No, better get a linstock, lad,’ said another.

When I had at length lit my cigarette without the aid of Velenchúk, who was again trying to take a piece

of charcoal in his hand, he rubbed his burnt fingers on the skirts of his sheepskin coat and then, probably for want of something else to do, lifted a large piece of plane-tree wood and swung it into the fire. When at last he felt free to rest a bit, he came close up to the fire, threw open his cloak which he wore like a mantle fastened by one button, spread out his legs, held out his big, black hands, and drawing his mouth a bit to one side, screwed up his eyes.

'Ah, I've gone and forgot my pipe. Here's a go, lads!' said he after a short silence, not addressing any one in particular.

CHAPTER II

IN Russia there are three predominant types of soldier under which the men of all our forces—whether line, guards, infantry, cavalry, artillery, army of the Caucasus, or what not—may be classified.

These principal types, including many sub-divisions and combinations, are:

1. The submissive;
2. The domineering;
3. The reckless.

The submissive are divided into (*a*) the calmly submissive and (*b*) the bustlingly submissive.

The domineering are divided into (*a*) the sternly domineering and (*b*) the diplomatically domineering.

The reckless are divided into (*a*) the amusingly reckless and (*b*) the viciously reckless.

The type most often met with—a type more lovable and attractive than the others and generally accompanied by the best Christian virtues,—meekness, piety, patience, and devotion to the will of God,—is the submissive type in general. The distinctive feature of the calmly submissive is his invincible resignation to and contempt for all the reverses of fate which may befall him; the distinctive features of the submissive

drunkard are a mild, poetic disposition and sensibility; the distinctive feature of the bustlingly submissive is limited mental capacity combined with purposeless industry and zeal.

The domineering type in general is found chiefly among the higher grade of soldiers: the corporals, sergeants, sergeant-majors and so on. The first sub-division, the sternly domineering, is a noble, energetic, pre-eminently military type and does not exclude high poetic impulses (Corporal Antónov, with whom I wish to acquaint the reader, belonged to this type). The second sub-division, formed by the diplomatically domineering, has for some time past been increasing largely. A man of this type is always eloquent and literate,¹ wears pink shirts, won't eat out of the common pot, sometimes smokes tobacco of Mousátov's brand, and thinks himself much superior to the common soldier, but is rarely himself as good a soldier as the domineering of the first sub-division.

The reckless type, like the domineering type, is good in its first sub-division, the amusingly reckless, whose characteristic traits are irresistible mirth, great capacity of all kinds, and a highly gifted and daring nature. As with the domineering class, the second sub-division is bad; the viciously reckless are terribly bad, but to the honour of the Russian army it must be said that this type is very rare, and when found it is excluded from companionship by the public opinion of the soldiers themselves. Unbelief and a kind of boldness in vice are the chief traits characteristic of this class.

Velenchúk belonged to the bustlingly submissive. He was an Ukrainian by birth, had already served for fifteen years, and although not a showy or smart soldier he was simple-minded, kindly, extremely

¹ A distinction very frequently met with in Russian is between *literate* and *illiterate* people; i.e. between those who can and those who cannot read and write.

though often inopportunately zealous, and also exceedingly honest. I say exceedingly honest, because an incident had occurred the year before which made this characteristic quality of his very evident. It must be remembered that almost every soldier knows a trade. The most usual trades are tailoring and boot-making. Velenchúk taught himself the former, and judging from the fact that even Michael Doroféich, the sergeant-major, ordered clothes from him, he must have attained some proficiency at his craft. Last year, in camp, Velenchúk undertook to make a fine cloth coat for Michael Doroféich; but that very night after he had cut out the coat and measured out the trimmings and put them all under his pillow in the tent, a misfortune befell him: the cloth that had cost *seven rubles*, disappeared during the night! Velenchúk, with tears in his eyes, trembling white lips and suppressed sobs, informed the sergeant-major of the occurrence. Michael Doroféich was enraged. In the first moment of irritation he threatened the tailor; but afterwards, being a man with means and kindly, he just waved his hand and did not demand from Velenchúk payment of the value of the cloth. In spite of all the fuss made by the fussy Velenchúk, in spite of all the tears he shed when telling of his mishap, the thief was not found. A strong suspicion fell on the viciously reckless soldier Chernóv, who slept in the same tent; but there were no positive proofs. The diplomatically domineering Michael Doroféich, being a man with means and having some little business transactions with the master-at-arms and the caterer of the mess (the aristocracy of the battery), very soon forgot all about the loss of his mufti coat. Not so Velenchúk. He did not forget his misfortune. The soldiers said they feared at the time that he might commit suicide or run away into the mountains, so great was the effect of his mishap upon him. He neither ate nor drank and could not even work, but

was continually crying. When three days had passed he appeared, quite pale, before Michael Doroféich, took with trembling fingers a gold coin from under his cuff and gave it him. 'Heaven's my witness, Michael Doroféich, that it's all I have, and even that I borrowed from Zhdánov,' said he, sobbing again; 'and the other two rubles I swear I will also return as soon as I have earned them. He' (whom 'he' meant Velenchúk did not himself know) 'has made me appear like a rascal before you. He—with his loathsome, viper soul—he takes the last morsel from his brother soldier, after I have served for fifteen years. . . .' To the honour of Michael Doroféich be it said, he did not take the remaining two rubles, though Velenchúk brought them to him two months later.

CHAPTER III

BESIDES Velenchúk, five other soldiers of my platoon sat warming themselves by our fire.

In the best place, on a butt with his back to the wind, sat Maksímov, the gun-sergeant of the platoon, smoking a pipe. The habit of commanding and the consciousness of his dignity were betrayed by the pose, the look, and by every movement of this man, not to mention his nankeen-covered sheepskin coat and the butt he was sitting on, which latter is an emblem of power at a halting-place.

When I came up he turned his head towards me without removing his eyes from the fire, and his look, following the direction his head had taken, only fell on me some time later. Maksímov was not a serf but a peasant-yeoman; he had some money, had qualified to take a class in the school-brigade, and had stuffed his head with erudition. He was awfully rich and awfully learned, so the soldiers said. I remember how once when we were practising plunging fire with a quadrant, he explained to the soldiers gathered

round, that a spirit level *is nothing but as it occurs that atmospheric mercury has its motion*. In reality, Maksimov was far from being stupid, and understood his work thoroughly; but he had the unfortunate peculiarity of sometimes purposely speaking so that there was no possibility of understanding him and so that, I am convinced, he did not understand his own words. He was particularly fond of the words 'as it occurs' and 'continues', so that when I heard him say 'as it occurs' or 'continues', I knew beforehand that I should understand nothing of what followed. The soldiers on the other hand, as far as I could judge, liked to hear his 'as it occurs' and suspected it of being fraught with deep meaning, though they did not understand a word of it any more than I did. This they attributed entirely to their own stupidity, and respected Theodor Maksimov all the more. In a word, Maksimov was one of the diplomatically domineering.

The soldier next to him, who had bared his sinewy red legs and was putting on his boots again by the fire, was Antónov,—that same Corporal Antónov who in 1837, remaining with only two others in charge of an exposed gun, persisted in firing back at a powerful enemy and, with two bullets in his leg, continued to serve his gun and to reload it.

The soldiers used to say that he would have been made a gun-sergeant long ago but for his character. And his character really was very peculiar. No one could have been calmer, gentler, or more accurate than he was when sober; but when he had a fit of drinking he became quite another man; he would not submit to authority, fought, brawled, and became a perfectly good-for-nothing soldier. Only the week before this, during the Carnival, he had had a drinking-bout, and in spite of all threats, persuasions, and being tied to a cannon, he went on drinking and brawling up to the first day of Lent. During the whole of Lent, though the division had been ordered not to

fast, he fed on dried bread, and during the first week would not even drink the regulation cup of vodka. But one had to see his sturdy thick-set figure, as of wrought iron, on its stumpy bandy legs, and his shiny moustached visage when in a tipsy mood he took the *balaláyka* in his sinewy hands and looking carelessly round played *Lady*, or walked down the street with his cloak thrown loosely over his shoulders, his medals dangling, his hands in the pockets of his blue nankeen trousers, and a look on his countenance of soldierly pride and of contempt for all that was not of the artillery—one had to see all this in order to understand how impossible it was for him at such a moment to abstain from fighting an orderly, a Cossack, an infantry-man, a peasant (in fact, anyone not of the artillery) who was rude to him or happened merely to be in his way. He fought and rioted not so much for his own pleasure as to maintain the spirit of soldiership in general, of which he felt himself to be the representative.

The third soldier, who sat on his heels smoking a clay pipe, was the artillery driver Chíkin. He had an ear-ring in one of his ears, bristling little moustaches, and the physiognomy of a bird. 'Dear old Chíkin,' as the soldiers called him, was a wit. During the bitterest frost, or up to his knees in mud, or after going two days without food, on the march, on parade, or at drill, the 'dear fellow' was always and everywhere making faces, twisting his legs about, or cracking jokes that convulsed the whole platoon with laughter. At every halting-place, and in the camp, there was always a circle of young soldiers collected round Chíkin, who played *Filka*¹ with them, told them stories about the cunning soldier and the English *milord*, personated a Tartar or a German, or simply made remarks of his own at which everyone roared with laughter. It is true that his reputation as a wit

¹ A soldier's card game.—L. T.

was so well established in the battery that it was sufficient for him to open his mouth and wink in order to produce a general guffaw, but really there was much in him that was truly humorous and surprising. He saw something special, something that never entered anybody else's head, in everything, and above all, this capacity for seeing the funny side of things was proof against any and every trial.

The fourth soldier was an insignificant-looking boy recruited the year before and this was his first campaign. He stood surrounded by the smoke and so near the flames that his threadbare cloak seemed in danger of catching fire, yet judging by the way he extended the skirts of his cloak and bent out his calves, and by his quiet self-satisfied pose, he was feeling highly contented.

The fifth and last of the soldiers was Daddy Zhdánov. He sat a little way off, cutting a stick. Zhdánov had been serving in the battery longer than anyone else, had known all the others as recruits, and they were all in the habit of calling him 'daddy'. It was said of him that he never drank, smoked, or played cards (not even 'noses'), and never used bad language. He spent all his spare time boot-making, went to church on holidays where that was possible, or else put a farthing taper before his icon and opened the book of psalms, the only book he could read. He seldom kept company with the other soldiers. To those who were his seniors in rank though his juniors in years he was coldly respectful; with his equals he had few opportunities of mixing, not being a drinker. He liked the recruits and the youngest soldiers best: he always took them under his protection, admonished them, and often helped them. Everyone in the battery considered him a capitalist because he had some twenty-five rubles, out of which he was always ready to lend something to a soldier in real need.

The same Maksímov who was now gun-sergeant

told me that ten years ago, when he first came as a recruit and drank all he had with the old soldiers who were in the habit of drinking, Zhdánov, noticing his unfortunate position, called him up, severely reprimanded him for his conduct and even beat him, delivered a lecture on how one should live in the army, and sent him away after giving him a shirt (which Maksímov lacked) and half-a-ruble in money. 'He made a man of me,' Maksímov always used to say with respect and gratitude. He also helped Velenchúk (whom he had taken under his protection since he was a recruit) at the time of his misfortune. When the coat was stolen he helped him as he had helped many and many another during the twenty-five years of his service.

One could not hope to find a man in the service who knew his work more thoroughly or was a better or more conscientious soldier than he; but he was too meek and insignificant-looking to be made a gun-sergeant, though he had been bombardier for fifteen years. Zhdánov's one enjoyment and passion was song. He had a few favourite songs, always collected a circle of singers from among the younger soldiers, and though he could not sing himself he would stand by them, his hands in the pockets of his cloak, his eyes closed, showing sympathy by the movements of his head and jaw. I don't know why, but that regular movement of the jaws below the ears, which I never noticed in anyone else, seemed to me extremely expressive. His snow-white head, his blackened moustaches, and his sunburnt, wrinkled face, gave him at first sight a stern and harsh expression; but on looking closer into his large round eyes, especially when they smiled (he never laughed with his lips), you were suddenly struck by something remarkable in their unusually mild, almost childlike look.

CHAPTER IV

'I'll be blowed! I've gone and forgot my pipe. Here's a go, lads!' repeated Velenchúk.

'You should smoke *cikars*, old fellow!' began Chíkin, drawing his mouth to one side and winking. 'There, now, I always smoke *cikars* when I'm at home—they's sweeter.'

Of course everybody burst out laughing.

'Forgot your pipe, indeed!' interrupted Maksímov without heeding the general mirth, and beating the tobacco out of his pipe into the palm of his left hand with the proud air of a superior; 'where did you vanish to—ch, Velenchúk?'

Velenchúk, half turning round to him, was about to raise his hand to his cap, but dropped it again.

'Seems to me you hadn't your sleep out after yesterday—falling asleep when you are once up! It's not thanks the likes of you get for such goings on.'

'May I die, Theodor Maksímov, if a drop has passed my lips; I don't myself know what happened to me,' answered Velenchúk. 'Much cause I had for revelling,' he muttered.

'Just so; but we have to answer to the authorities because of the likes of you, and you continue—it's quite scandalous!' the eloquent Maksímov concluded in a calmer tone.

'It's quite wonderful, lads,' Velenchúk went on after a moment's silence, scratching his head and addressing no one in particular; 'really quite wonderful, lads! Here have I been serving for the last sixteen years and such a thing never happened to me. When we were ordered to appear for muster I was all right, but at the "park", there *it* suddenly clutches hold of me, and clutches and clutches, and down it throws me, down on the ground and no more ado—and I did not myself know how I fell asleep, lads! That must have been the trances,' he concluded.

'True enough, I hardly managed to wake you,' said Antónov as he pulled on his boot. 'I had to push and push just as if you'd been a log!'

'Fancy now,' said Velenchúk, 'if I'd been drunk now!'

'That's just like a woman we had at home,' began Chíkin; 'she hardly got off the stove for two years. Once they began waking her—they thought she was asleep—and she was already dead. She used to be taken sleepy that way. That's what it is, old fellow!'

'Now then, Chíkin, won't you tell us how you set the tone during your leave of absence?' said Maksímov, looking at me with a smile as if to say: 'Would you, too, like to hear the stupid fellow?'

'What tone, Theodor Maksímov?' said Chíkin, giving me a rapid side-glance. 'In course I told them what sort of a *Caw-cusses* we'd got here.'

'Well, yes, how did you do it? There! don't give yourself airs; tell us how you *administrated* it to them.'

'How should I administrate it? In course they asked me how we live,' Chíkin began rapidly with the air of a man recounting something he had repeated several times before. '"We live well, old fellow," says I. "Provisions in plenty we get: morning and night a cup of *chokelad* for every *soldier lad*, and at noon barley broth before us is set, such as gentle-folks get, and instead of vodka we get a pint of Modera wine from Devirier, such as costs forty-four—with the bottle ten more!"'

'Fine Modera,' Velenchúk shouted louder than anyone, rolling with laughter: 'that's Modera of the right sort!'

'Well, and what did you tell them about the Asiaites?' Maksímov went on to ask when the general mirth had subsided a little.

Chíkin stooped over the fire, poked out a bit of charcoal with a stick, put it to his pipe, and long continued puffing at his shag as though not noticing the

silent curiosity awakened in his hearers. When he had at last drawn enough smoke he threw the bit of charcoal away, pushed his cap yet farther back, and, stretching himself, continued with a slight smile—

‘Well, so they asked, “What’s that Cherkés fellow or Turk as you’ve got down in your Cawcusses”, they say, “as fights?” and so I says, “Them’s not all of one sort; there’s different Cherkéses, old fellow. There’s the Wagabones, them as lives in the stony mountains and eat stones instead of bread. They’re big,” says I, “as big as a good-sized beam, they’ve one eye in the forehead and wear burning red caps,” just such as yours, old fellow,’ he added, turning to the young recruit, who really wore an absurd cap with a red crown.

At this unexpected sally the recruit suddenly collapsed, slapped his knees, and burst out laughing and coughing so that he hardly managed to utter in a stifled voice, ‘Them Wagabones is the right sort!’

“‘Then”, says I, “there’s also the Mopingers,”” continued Chíkin, making his cap slip onto his forehead with a movement of his head: “‘These others are little twins, so big . . . all in pairs,” says I, “they run about hand in hand at such a rate,” says I, “that you couldn’t catch ’em on a horse!”—“Then how’s it, lad,” they say, “how’s them Mopingers, be they born hand in hand?”” He said this in a hoarse bass, pretending to imitate a peasant. ““Yes,” says I, “he’s naturally like that. Tear their hands apart and they’ll bleed just like a Chinaman: take a Chinaman’s cap off and it’ll bleed.”—“And tell us, lad, how do they fight?”—“That’s how,” says I, “they catch you and rip your belly up and wind your bowels round your arm, and wind and wind. They go on winding and you go on laughing till your breath all goes.””

‘Well, and did they believe you, Chíkin?’ said Maksímov with a slight smile, while all the rest were dying with laughter.

‘Such queer people, Theodor Maksímych, they believe everything. On my word they do. But when I told them about Mount Kazbék and said that the snow didn’t melt on it all the summer, they mocked at me! “What are you bragging for, lad,” they says; “a big mountain and the snow on it don’t melt? Why, lad, when the thaw sets in here every tiny bit of a hillock thaws first while the snow still lies in the hollows.” There now!’ Chíkin concluded with a wink.

CHAPTER V

THE bright disk of the sun shining through the milky-white mist had already risen to a considerable height. The purple-grey horizon gradually widened, but though it had receded considerably it was still as sharply outlined by a deceptive white wall of mist.

Beyond the felled wood a good-sized plain now opened in front of us. The black or milky-white or purple smoke of the fires expanded and fantastic shapes of white mist-clouds floated above the plain. An occasional group of mounted Tartars appeared far in the distance before us and at rare intervals the reports of our rifles¹ and of their *vintóvkas* and cannon were to be heard.

This, as Captain Khlópov said, was ‘not yet business, but only play.’

The commander of the 9th Company of Chasseurs, that formed our support, came up to our guns, pointed to three Tartars² on horseback skirting the

¹ Most of the Russian army at that time were armed with smooth-bore muskets, but a few had wide-calibred muzzle-loading rifles (*stútzers*), which were difficult to handle and slow to load. *Vintóvkas* were also rifles.

² Russians in the Caucasus used the word ‘Tartar’ loosely for any of the native Mohammedan tribes (Circassians, Kabardáns, &c.), much as among ourselves the word ‘Niggers’ is used to denote almost any dark race.

forest some 1,400 yards from us, and with the fondness for artillery fire common among infantry officers in general, asked me to let off a ball or bomb at them.

'Do you see?' he said with a kind and persuasive smile as he stretched his hand from behind my shoulder, 'in front of those big trees there . . . one on a white horse and in a black Circassian cloak and two others behind. Do you see? Could you not, please?'

'And there are three more riding at the outskirts of the forest,' said Antónov, who had astonishingly sharp eyesight, coming up to us, and hiding behind his back the pipe he had been smoking. 'There, the one in front has taken his gun out of its case. They can be seen distinctly, y'r honor!'

'Look there! he's fired, lads. D'ye see the white smoke?' said Velenchúk, who was one of a group of soldiers standing a little behind us.

'At our line surely, the blackguard!' remarked another.

'See what a lot of 'em come streaming out of the forest. Must be looking round . . . want to place a gun,' said a third.

'Supposing now a bomb was sent right into that lot, wouldn't they spit!'

'And what d'ye think, old fellow—that it would just reach 'em?' said Chíkin.

'Twelve hundred or twelve hundred and fifty yards: not more than that,' said Maksímov calmly and as if speaking to himself, though it was evident he was just as anxious to fire as the rest: 'if we were to give an elevation of forty-five lines to our "unicorn"¹ we could hit the very point, that is to say, perfectly.'

'D'ye know, if you were now to aim at that group you would be sure to hit somebody. There now, they are all together—please be quick and give the order

¹ The 'unicorn' was a type of gun, narrowing towards the muzzle, used in the Russian artillery at that time.

to fire,' the company commander continued to entreat me.

'Are we to point the gun?' suddenly asked Antónov in an abrupt bass with a look as if of gloomy anger.

I must admit that I also felt a strong wish to fire, so I ordered the second gun to be trained.

I had hardly given the order before the shell was charged and rammed in and Antónov, leaning against the cheek of the gun-carriage and holding two of his thick fingers to the base-ring, was directing the movement of the tail of the gun. 'Right, left—a bit to the left, a wee bit—more—more—right!' he said, stepping from the gun with a look of pride.

The infantry officer, I, and Maksimov, one after the other, approached, put our heads to the sights, and expressed our various opinions.

'By Heavens, it will shoot over,' remarked Velenchúk, clicking his tongue, though he was only looking over Antónov's shoulder and therefore had no grounds for this supposition. 'By Hea—vens it will shoot over; it will hit that there tree, my lads!'

I gave the order: 'Two.'

The men stepped away from the gun. Antónov ran aside to watch the flight of the shot. The touch-hole flashed and the brass rang. At the same moment we were enveloped in a cloud of powder-smoke and, emerging from the overpowering boom of the discharge, the humming, metallic sound of the flying shot receded with the swiftness of lightning and died away in the distance amid general silence.

A little beyond the group of horsemen a white cloudlet appeared; the Tartars galloped away in all directions and the report of the explosion reached us. 'That was very fine!' 'Ah, how they galloped!' 'The devils don't like that!' came the words of approval and ridicule from the ranks of the artillery and infantry.

'If we had had the gun pointed only a touch lower

we should just have caught him. I said it would hit the tree and sure enough it did go to the right,' remarked Velenchúk.

CHAPTER VI

LEAVING the soldiers to discuss how the Tartars galloped off when they saw the shell, why they had been riding there, and whether there were many of them in the forest, I went and sat down with the company commander under a tree a few steps off to wait while the cutlets he had invited me to share were being warmed up. The company commander, Bólkhov, was one of the officers nicknamed 'bon-jourists' in the regiment. He was a man of some means, had formerly served in the Guards, and spoke French. But in spite of all this his comrades liked him. He was clever enough, and had tact enough, to wear a coat of Petersburg make, to eat a good dinner, and to speak French, without too much offending his fellow officers. After talking about the weather, the military operations, our mutual acquaintances among the officers, and having assured ourselves of the satisfactory state of each other's ideas by questions and answers and the views expressed, we involuntarily passed to more intimate conversation. And when people belonging to the same circle meet in the Caucasus a very evident, even if unspoken, question arises: 'Why are you here?' and it was to this silent question of mine that, as it seemed to me, my companion wished to reply.

'When will this expedition end?' he said lazily. 'It is so dull.'

'I don't think it dull,' said I. 'It's much worse on the staff.'

'Oh, it's ten thousand times worse on the staff,' he said irascibly. 'No, I mean when will the whole thing end?'

‘What is it you want to end?’ I asked.

‘Everything,—the whole affair! . . . Are the cutlets ready, Nikoláyev?’

‘Then why did you come to serve here if you so dislike the Caucasus?’ I said.

‘Do you know why?’ he answered with resolute frankness. ‘In obedience to tradition! You know there exists in Russia a most curious tradition about the Caucasus, making it out to be a “promised land” for all unfortunates.’

‘Yes, that is almost true,’ said I. ‘Most of us ——’

‘But the best of it is,’ he said, interrupting me, ‘that all of us who came to the Caucasus in obedience to the tradition made a terrible mistake in our calculations and I can’t for the life of me see why one should, in consequence of an unfortunate love affair or of financial troubles, choose to go and serve in the Caucasus rather than in Kazán or Kalúga. Why in Russia they imagine the Caucasus to be something majestic: eternal virgin ice, rushing torrents, daggers, mantles, fair Circassians, and an atmosphere of terror and romance; but in reality there is nothing amusing in it. If they only realized that we never get to the virgin ice, that it would not be at all amusing if we did, and that the Caucasus is divided into governments—Stavrópol, Tiflís, and so on.’

‘Yes,’ said I, laughing, ‘we look very differently at the Caucasus when we are in Russia and when we are here. It is like what you may have experienced when reading verses in a language you are not familiar with; you imagine them to be much better than they are.’

‘I really don’t know; but I dislike this Caucasus awfully,’ he said interrupting me.

‘Well, no; I still like the Caucasus only in a different way.’

‘Perhaps it is all right,’ he continued irritably; ‘all I know is that I’m not all right in the Caucasus.’

‘Why is that?’ I asked, to say something.

‘Well, first because it has deceived me. All that I, in obedience to tradition, came to the Caucasus to be cured of has followed me here, only with the difference that there it was all on a big scale and now it is on a little dirty one where at each step I find millions of petty anxieties, shabbinesses, and insults; and next because I feel that I am sinking, morally, lower and lower every day; but chiefly, because I do not feel fit for the service here. I can’t stand running risks. The fact of the matter is simply that I am not brave.’

He stopped and looked at me, not joking.

Though this unasked-for confession surprised me very much, I did not contradict him as he evidently wished me to do, but waited for his own refutation of his words, which always follows in such cases.

‘Do you know, in coming on this expedition I am taking part in an action for the first time,’ he continued, ‘and you can’t think what was going on in me yesterday. When the sergeant-major brought the order that my company was to join the column, I turned as white as a sheet and could not speak for excitement. And if you only knew what a night I had! If it were true that one’s hair turns white from fear, mine ought to be perfectly white to-day, because I don’t think any one condemned to death ever suffered more in a night than I did; and even now, though I feel a bit easier than in the night, this is what goes on inside!’ he added, turning his fist about before his chest. ‘And what is funny is that while a most fearful tragedy is being enacted, here one sits eating cutlets and onions and making believe that it is great fun.—Have we any wine, Nikoláyev?’ he added, yawning.

‘That’s *him*, my lads!’ came the excited voice of one of the soldiers, and all eyes turned towards the border of the distant forest.

In the distance a puff of bluish smoke expanded and rose, blown about by the wind. When I had understood that this was a shot fired at us by the enemy, all before my eyes at the moment assumed a sort of new and majestic character. The piles of arms, the smoke of the fires, the blue sky, the green gun-carriages, Nikoláyev's sunburnt, moustached face—all seemed telling me that the ball that had already emerged from the smoke and was at that moment flying through space might be directed straight at my breast.

'Where did you get the wine?' I asked Bólkhov lazily, while deep in my soul two voices spoke with equal clearness. One said, 'Lord receive my soul in peace,' the other, 'I hope I shall not stoop, but smile, while the ball is passing,' and at that moment something terribly unpleasant whistled past our heads and a cannon ball crashed down a couple of paces from us.

'There now, had I been a Napoleon or a Frederick I should certainly have paid you a compliment,' Bólkhov remarked, turning towards me quite calmly.

'You have done so as it is,' I answered, with difficulty hiding the excitement produced in me by the danger just passed.

'Well, what if I have?—no one will write it down.'

'Yes, I will.'

'Well, if you do put it down, it will only be "for critikism", as Míshenkov says,' he added with a smile.

'Ugh! the damned thing!' just then remarked Antónov behind us, as he spat over his shoulder with vexation, 'just missed my legs!'

All my attempts to seem calm, and all our cunning phrases, suddenly seemed to me insufferably silly after that simple exclamation.

CHAPTER VII

THE enemy had really placed two guns where we had seen the Tartars riding, and they fired a shot every twenty or thirty minutes at our men who were felling the wood. My platoon was ordered forward to the plain to answer the enemy's fire. A puff of smoke appeared on the outskirts of the forest, then followed a report and a whistle, and a ball fell in front or behind us. The enemy's shots fell fortunately for us and we sustained no losses.

The artillerymen behaved splendidly as they always do; loaded quickly, pointed carefully at the spots where the puffs of smoke were, and quietly joked with one another.

The infantry supports lay near in silent inaction awaiting their turn. The wood-fellers went on with their work, the axes rang faster and more unintermittently through the forest; but when the whistle of a shot became audible all were suddenly silent and, in the midst of the deathly stillness, voices not quite calm exclaimed, 'Scatter, lads!' and all eyes followed the ball ricochetting over wood piles and strewn branches.

The mist had now risen quite high and, turning into clouds, gradually disappeared into the dark-blue depths of the sky; the unveiled sun shone brightly, throwing sparkling reflections from the steel bayonets, the brass of the guns, the thawing earth, and the glittering hoar-frost. In the air one felt the freshness of the morning frost together with the warmth of the spring sunshine; thousands of different hues and tints mingled in the dry leaves of the forest, and the shining, beaten track plainly showed the traces left by wheels and the marks of rough-shod horses' feet.

The movement became greater and more noticeable between the two forces. On all sides the blue smoke of the guns appeared more and more frequently.

Dragoons rode forward, the streamers of their lances flying; from the infantry companies one heard songs, and the carts laden with firewood formed into a train in our rear. The general rode up to our platoon and ordered us to prepare to retire. The enemy settled in the bushes on our left flank and their snipers began to molest us seriously. A bullet came humming from the woods to the left and struck a gun-carriage, then came another, and a third. . . . The infantry supports that had been lying near us rose noisily, took up their muskets and formed into line.

The small-arm firing increased and bullets flew more and more frequently. The retreat commenced and consequently the serious part of the action, as is usual in the Caucasus.

Everything showed that the artillerymen liked the bullets as little as the infantry had liked the cannon-balls. Antónov frowned, Chíkin imitated the bullets and joked about them, but it was easy to see he did not like them. 'It's in a mighty hurry,' he said of one of them; another he called 'little bee'; a third, which seemed to fly slowly past overhead with a kind of piteous wail, he called an 'orphan', which caused general laughter.

The recruit who, unaccustomed to such scenes, bent his head to one side and stretched his neck every time a bullet passed, also made the soldiers laugh. 'What, is that a friend of yours you're bowing to?' they said to him. Velenchúk also, usually quite indifferent to danger, was now excited: he was evidently vexed that we did not fire case-shot in the direction whence the bullets came. He repeated several times in a discontented tone, 'Why is *he* allowed to go for us and gets nothing in return? If we turned a gun that way and gave them a taste of case-shot they'd hold their noise, no fear!'

It was true that it was time to do this, so I ordered them to fire a last bomb and then to load with case-shot.

'Case-shot!' Antónov called out briskly as he went through the thick of the smoke to sponge out the gun as soon as it was discharged.

At that moment I heard just behind me the rapid whiz of a bullet suddenly stopped by something, with a dull thud. My heart ceased beating. 'Someone of the men has been hit,' I thought, while a sad presentiment made me afraid to turn round. And really that sound was followed by the heavy fall of a body, and the heart-rending 'Oh-o-oh' of someone who had been wounded. 'I'm hit, lads!' a voice I knew exclaimed with an effort. It was Velenchúk. He was lying on his back between the limbers and a cannon. The cartridge-bag he had been carrying was thrown to one side. His forehead was covered with blood, and a thick red stream was running down over his right eye and nose. He was wounded in the stomach but hardly bled at all there; his forehead he had hurt against a log in falling.

All this I made out much later; the first moment I could only see an indistinct mass and, as it seemed to me, a tremendous quantity of blood.

Not one of the soldiers who were loading said a word, only the young recruit muttered something that sounded like 'Dear me! he's bleeding', and Antónov, frowning, gave an angry grunt; but it was clear that the thought of death passed through the soul of each. All set to work very actively and the gun was loaded in a moment, but the ammunition-bearer bringing the case-shot went two or three steps round the spot where Velenchúk still lay groaning.

CHAPTER VIII

EVERYONE who has been in action undoubtedly knows that strange and though illogical yet powerful feeling of aversion for the spot where some one has been killed or wounded. It was evident that for a moment my men gave way to this feeling when Velenchúk had to

be taken to the cart that came up to fetch him. Zhdánov came up angrily to the wounded man and, taking him under the arms, lifted him without heeding his loud screams. 'Now then, what are you standing there for? take hold!' he shouted, and about ten assistants, some of them superfluous, immediately surrounded Velenchúk. But hardly had they moved him when he began screaming and struggling terribly.

'What are you screaming like a hare for?' said Antónov roughly, holding his leg; 'mind, or we'll just leave you.'

And the wounded man really became quiet and only now and then uttered, 'Oh, it's my death! Oh, oh, oh, lads!'

When he was laid in the cart he even stopped moaning and I heard him speak to his comrades in low clear tones, probably saying farewell to them.

No one likes to look at a wounded man during an action and, instinctively hurrying to end this scene, I ordered him to be taken quickly to the ambulance, and returned to the guns. But after a few minutes I was told that Velenchúk was asking for me, and I went up to the cart.

The wounded man lay at the bottom of the cart holding on to the sides with both hands. His broad healthy face had completely changed during those few moments; he seemed to have grown thinner and years older, his lips were thin and pale and pressed together with an evident strain. The hasty and dull expression of his glance was replaced by a kind of bright clear radiance, and on the bloody forehead and nose already lay the impress of death. Though the least movement caused him excruciating pain, he nevertheless asked to have a small *cherez*¹ with money taken from his left leg.

The sight of his bare, white, healthy leg, when his

¹ The *cherez* is a purse in the form of a garter, usually worn by soldiers below the knee.—L. T.

jack-boot had been taken off and the purse untied, produced on me a terribly sad feeling.

'Here are three rubles and a half,' he said, as I took the purse: 'you'll take care of them.'

The cart was starting, but he stopped it.

'I was making a cloak for Lieutenant Sulimóvsky. He gave me two rubles. I bought buttons for one and a half, and half a ruble is in my bag with the buttons. Please let him have it.'

'All right! all right!' said I. 'Get well again, old fellow.'

He did not answer; the cart started and he again began to groan and cry out in a terrible, heart-rending voice. It was as if, having done with the business of this life, he did not think it necessary to restrain himself and considered it permissible to allow himself this relief.

CHAPTER IX

'WHERE are you off to? Come back! Where are you going?' I shouted to the recruit, who with his reserve linstock under his arm and a stick of some sort in his hand was, in the coolest manner, following the cart that bore the wounded man.

But the recruit only looked at me lazily, muttered something or other, and continued his way, so that I had to send a soldier to bring him back. He took off his red cap and looked at me with a stupid smile.

'Where were you going?' I asked.

'To the camp.'

'Why?'

'Why? . . . Velenchúk is wounded,' he said, again smiling.

'What's that to you? You must stay here.'

He looked at me with surprise, then turned quietly round, put on his cap, and went back to his place.

The affair in general was successful. The Cossacks,

as we heard, had made a fine charge and brought back three dead Tartars;¹ the infantry had provided itself with firewood and had only half-a-dozen men wounded; the artillery had lost only Velenchúk and two horses. For that, two miles of forest had been cut down and the place so cleared as to be unrecognizable. Instead of the thick outskirts of the forest you saw before you a large plain covered with smoking fires and cavalry and infantry marching back to camp.

Though the enemy continued to pursue us with artillery and small-arm fire up to the cemetery by the little river we had crossed in the morning, the retirement was successfully accomplished. I was already beginning to dream of the cabbage-soup and mutton-ribs with buckwheat that were awaiting me in camp, when a message came from the General ordering a redoubt to be constructed by the river, and the 3rd battalion of the K—— Regiment and the platoon of the 4th Battery to remain there till next day.

The carts with the wood and the wounded, the Cossacks, the artillery, the infantry with muskets and faggots on their shoulders, all passed us with noise and songs. Every face expressed animation and pleasure caused by the escape from danger and the hope of rest. Only we and the 3rd battalion had to postpone those pleasant feelings till to-morrow.

CHAPTER X

WHILE we of the artillery were busy with the guns—parking the limbers and the ammunition wagons and arranging the picket-ropes—the infantry had already piled their muskets, made up camp-fires, built little

¹ The 'Tartars', being Mohammedans, made a point of not letting the bodies of their slain fall into the hands of the 'unbelievers', but removed them and buried them as heroes. The capture of three bodies therefore indicates the vigour of the attack and the demoralization of the enemy.

huts of branches and maize straw, and begun boiling their buckwheat.

The twilight had set in. Bluish white clouds crept over the sky. The mist, turning into fine dank drizzle, wetted the earth and the soldiers' cloaks; the horizon narrowed and all the surroundings assumed a gloomier hue. The damp I felt through my boots and on my neck, the ceaseless movement and talk in which I took no part, the sticky mud on which my feet kept slipping, and my empty stomach, all combined to put me into the dreariest, most unpleasant frame of mind after the physical and moral weariness of the day. I could not get Velenchúk out of my head. The whole simple story of his soldier-life depicted itself persistently in my imagination.

His last moments were as clear and calm as his whole life had been. He had lived too honestly and been too artless for his simple faith in a future heavenly life to be shaken at the decisive moment.

'Your honour!' said Nikoláyev, coming up to me, 'the Captain asks you to come and have tea with him.'

Having scrambled through, as best I could, between the piles of arms and the camp-fires, I followed Nikoláyev to where Bólkhov was, thinking with pleasure of a tumbler of hot tea and a cheerful conversation which would disperse my gloomy thoughts.

'Have you found him?' I heard Bólkhov's voice say from inside a maize-hut in which a light was burning.

'I've brought him, y'r honour,' answered Nikoláyev's bass voice.

Inside the hut Bólkhov was sitting on a dry mantle, with unbuttoned coat and no cap. A samovar stood boiling by his side and on a drum were light refreshments. A bayonet holding a candle was stuck into the ground.

'What do you think of it?' he asked, looking proudly round his cosy establishment. It really was so nice

inside the hut that at tea I quite forgot the damp, the darkness, and Velenchúk's wound. We talked of Moscow and of things that had not the least relation to the war or to the Caucasus.

After a moment of silence such as sometimes occurs in the most animated conversation, Bólkhov looked at me with a smile.

'I think our conversation this morning struck you as being very strange,' he said.

'No, why do you think so? It only seemed to me that you were too frank; there are things which we all know, but which should never be mentioned.'

'Why not? If there were the least possibility of changing this life for the lowest and poorest without danger and without service, I should not hesitate a moment.'

'Then why don't you return to Russia?' I asked.

'Why?' he repeated. 'Oh, I have thought about that long ago. I can't return to Russia now until I have the Anna and Vladímir orders: an Anna round my neck and the rank of major, as I planned when I came here.'

'Why?—if, as you say, you feel unfit for the service here.'

'But what if I feel still more unfit to go back to Russia to the same position that I left? That is also one of the traditions in Russia, confirmed by Pássek, Sleptsóv and others, that one need only go to the Caucasus to be laden with rewards. Everyone expects and demands it of us; and I have been here for two years, have been on two expeditions, and have got nothing. But still I have so much ambition that I won't leave on any account until I am a major with a Vladímir and Anna round my neck. I have become so concerned about it that it upsets me when Gnilókíshkin gets a reward and I don't. And then how am I to show myself in Russia, to the village elder, to the merchant Kotélnikov to whom I sell my corn, to my

Moscow aunt, and to all those good people, if after two years spent in the Caucasus I return without any reward? It is true I don't at all wish to know all those people, and they no doubt care very little about me either; but man is so made that, though I don't want to know them, yet on account of them I'm wasting the best years of my life, all my life's happiness, and am ruining my future.'

CHAPTER XI

Just then we heard the voice of the commander of the battalion outside, addressing Bólkhov.

'Who is with you, Nicholas Fëdorovich?'

Bólkhov gave him my name, and then three officers scrambled into the hut—Major Kirsánov; the adjutant of his battalion; and Captain Trosénko.

Kirsánov was not tall but stout, he had black moustaches, rosy cheeks, and oily little eyes. These eyes were his most remarkable feature. When he laughed nothing remained of them but two tiny moist stars, and these little stars together with his wide-stretched lips and outstretched neck often gave him an extraordinarily senseless look. In the regiment Kirsánov behaved himself and bore himself better than anyone else; his subordinates did not complain of him and his superiors respected him—though the general opinion was that he was very limited. He knew the service, was exact and zealous, always had ready money, kept a carriage and a man-cook, and knew how to make an admirable pretence of being proud.

'What were you talking about, Nicholas Fëdorovich?'

'Why, about the attractions of the service here.'

But just then Kirsánov noticed me, a cadet, and to impress me with his importance he paid no attention to Bólkhov's reply, but looked at the drum and said—

‘Are you tired, Nicholas Fëdorovich?’

‘No, you see we——’ Bólkhov began.

But again the dignity of the commander of the battalion seemed to make it necessary to interrupt, and to ask another question.

‘That was a famous affair to-day, was it not?’

The adjutant of the battalion was a young ensign recently promoted from being a cadet, a modest, quiet lad with a bashful and kindly-pleasant face. I had met him at Bólkhov’s before. The lad would often come there, bow, sit down in a corner, and remain silent for hours making cigarettes and smoking them; then he would rise, bow, and go away. He was the type of a poor Russian nobleman’s son who had chosen the military career as the only one possible to him with his education, and who esteemed his position as an officer above everything else in the world—a simple-minded and lovable type notwithstanding the comical appurtenances inseparable from it: the tobacco-pouch, dressing-gown, guitar, and little moustache-brush we are accustomed to associate with it. It was told of him in the regiment that he bragged about being just but strict with his orderly, and that he used to say, ‘I punish seldom, but when I am compelled to do it it’s no joke,’ but that when his tipsy orderly robbed him outrageously and even began to insult him, he, the master, took him to the guard-house and ordered everything to be prepared for a flogging, but was so upset at the sight of the preparations that he could only say, ‘There now, you see, I could——’ and becoming quite disconcerted, ran home in great confusion and was henceforth afraid to look his man Chernóv in the eyes. His comrades gave the simple-minded boy no rest but teased him continually about this episode, and more than once I heard how he defended himself, and blushing to the tips of his ears assured them that it was not true, but just the contrary.

The third visitor, Captain Trosénko, was a thorough-going old Caucasian—that is, a man for whom the company he commanded had become his family; the fortress where the staff was, his home; and the soldiers' singing his only pleasure in life. He was a man for whom everything unconnected with the Caucasus was contemptible and scarcely worthy of being considered probable, and everything connected with the Caucasus was divided into two halves: ours and not ours. The first he loved, the second he hated with all the power of his soul; but above all he was a man of steeled, calm courage, wonderfully kind in his behaviour to his comrades and subordinates and desperately frank and even rude to aides-de-camp and 'bonjourists', for whom for some reason he had a great dislike. On entering the hut he nearly caved the roof in with his head, then suddenly sank down and sat on the ground.

'Well?' he said, and then suddenly remarking me whom he did not know, he stopped and gazed at me with a dull, fixed look.

'Well, and what have you been conversing about?' asked the major, taking out his watch and looking at it, though I am perfectly certain he had no need to.

'Why, I've been asked my reasons for serving here——'

'Of course, Nicholas Fëdorovich wishes to distinguish himself here, and then to return home,' said the major.

'Well, and you, Abram Ilých,' said Bólkhov, addressing Kirsánov, 'tell me why you are serving in the Caucasus.'

'I serve because in the first place, as you know, it is everyone's duty to serve. . . . What?' he then added, though no one had spoken. 'I had a letter from Russia yesterday, Nicholas Fëdorovich,' he continued, evidently wishing to change the subject; 'they write that . . . they ask such strange questions.'

‘What questions?’ asked Bólkhov.

The major began laughing.

‘Very queer questions. . . . They ask, can jealousy exist where there is no love. . . . What?’ he asked, turning round and glancing at us all.

‘Dear me!’ said Bólkhov, with a smile.

‘Yes, you know, it is nice in Russia,’ continued the major, just as if his sentences flowed naturally from one another. ‘When I was in Tarnóv in ’52 they received me everywhere as if I had been some emperor’s aide-de-camp. Will you believe it that at a ball at the Governor’s, when I came in, you know . . . well, they received me very well. The General’s wife herself, you know, talked to me and asked me about the Caucasus, and everybody was . . . so that I hardly knew. . . . They examined my gold sabre as if it were some curiosity; they asked for what I had received the sabre, for what the Anna, for what the Vladímír . . . so I just told them. . . . What? That’s what the Caucasus is good for, Nicholas Fëdorovich!’ he continued without waiting for any reply:—‘There they think very well of us Caucasians. You know a young man that’s a staff-officer and has an Anna and a Vladímír . . . that counts for a good deal in Russia. . . . What?’

‘And you, no doubt, piled it on a bit, Abram Ilých?’ said Bólkhov.

‘He—he!’ laughed the major stupidly. ‘You know one has to do that. And didn’t I feed well those two months!’

‘And tell me, is it nice there in Russia?’ said Trosénko, inquiring about Russia as though it were China or Japan.

‘Yes, and the champagne we drank those two months, it was awful!’

‘Eh, nonsense! You’ll have drunk nothing but lemonade. There now, I’d have burst to let them see how Caucasians drink. I’d have given them some-

thing to talk about. I'd have shown them how one drinks; eh, Bólkhov?' said Trosénko.

'But you, Daddy, have been more than ten years in the Caucasus,' said Bólkhov, 'and you remember what Ermólov¹ said? . . . And Abram Ilých has been only six.'

'Ten indeed! . . . nearly sixteen. . . . Well, Bólkhov, let us have some sage-vodka. It's damp, b-r-r-r! . . . Eh?' said Trosénko, smiling, 'Will you have a drink, Major?'

But the major had been displeased by the old captain's first remarks to him, and plainly drew back and sought refuge in his own grandeur. He hummed something, and again looked at his watch.

'For my part I shall never go there!' Trosénko continued without heeding the major's frowns. 'I have lost the habit of speaking and walking in the Russian way. They'd ask, "What curious creature is this coming here? Asia, that's what it is." Am I right, Nicholas Fëdorovich? Besides, what have I to go to Russia for? What does it matter? I shall be shot here some day. They'll ask, "Where's Trosénko?" "Shot!" What will you do with the 8th Company then, eh?' he added, always addressing the major.

'Send the officer on duty!' shouted the major, without answering the captain, though I again felt sure there was no need for him to give any orders.

'And you, young man, are glad, I suppose, to be drawing double pay?'² said the major, turning to the adjutant of the battalion after some moments of silence.

¹ General A. P. Ermólov (1772-1861), who was renowned for his firmness and justness as a ruler in the Caucasus, and who subdued Chéchnya and Daghestán, used to say that after ten years in the Caucasus an officer 'either takes to drink or marries a loose woman'.

² An officer's allowance in Russia proper was very small, but when on service in Poland, the Caucasus, Siberia, &c., they received a higher rate of pay.

'Yes, sir, very glad of course.'

'I think our pay now very high, Nicholas Fëdorovich,' continued the major; 'a young man can live very decently and even permit himself some small luxuries.'

'No, really, Abram Ilých,' said the adjutant bashfully. 'Though it's double it's barely enough. You see one must have a horse.'

'What are you telling me, young man? I have been an ensign myself and know. Believe me, one can live very well with care. But there! count it up,' added he, bending the little finger of his left hand.

'We always draw our salaries in advance; isn't that account enough for you?' said Trosénko, emptying a glass of vodka.

'Well, yes, but what do you expect. . . . What?'

Just then a white head with a flat nose thrust itself into the opening of the hut and a sharp voice said with a German accent—

'Are you there, Abram Ilých? The officer on duty is looking for you.'

'Come in, Kraft!' said Bólkhov.

A long figure in the uniform of the general staff crept in at the door and began shaking hands all round with peculiar fervour.

'Ah, dear Captain, are you here too?' said he, turning to Trosénko.

In spite of the darkness the new visitor made his way to the captain and to the latter's extreme surprise and dismay as it seemed to me, kissed him on the lips.

'This is a German trying to be hail fellow well met,' thought I.

CHAPTER XII

My surmise was at once confirmed. Captain Kraft asked for vodka, calling it a 'warmer', croaked horribly, and throwing back his head emptied the glass.

'Well, gentlemen, we have scoured the plains of

Chéchnya to-day, have we not?' he began, but seeing the officer on duty, stopped at once to allow the major to give his orders.

'Have you been round the lines?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Have the ambuscades been placed?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then give the company commanders orders to be as cautious as possible.'

'Yes, sir.'

The major screwed up his eyes in profound contemplation.

'Yes, and tell the men they may now boil their buckwheat.'

'They are already boiling it, sir.'

'All right! you may go, sir.'

'Well, we were just reckoning up how much an officer needs,' continued the major, turning to us with a condescending smile. 'Let us count. You want a uniform and a pair of trousers, don't you?'

'Certainly.'

'That, let us say, is 50 rubles for two years; therefore 25 rubles a year for clothes. Then for food, 40 kopeks a day—is that right?'

'Oh yes, that is even too much.'

'Well, never mind, I'll leave it so. Then for a horse and repair of harness and saddle, 30 rubles. And that is all. So it's 25, and 120, and 30—that's 175 rubles. So you have for luxuries—tea, sugar, tobacco—a matter of 20 rubles left. So you see . . . Isn't it so, Nicholas Fëdorovich?'

'No, but excuse me, Abram Ilych, said the adjutant timidly, 'nothing remains for tea and sugar. You allow one suit in two years; but it's hardly possible to keep oneself in trousers with all this marching. And boots? I wear out a pair almost every month. Then underclothing—shirts, towels,

leg-bands,¹—it all has to be bought. When one comes to reckon it all up nothing remains over. That's really so, Abram Ilých.'

'Ah, it's splendid to wear leg-bands,' Kraft suddenly remarked after a moment's silence, uttering the word 'leg-bands' in specially tender tones. 'It's so simple, you know; quite Russian!'

'I'll tell you something,' Trosénko remarked. 'Reckon what way you like and you'll find we might as well put our teeth away on a shelf, and yet here we are all alive, drinking tea, smoking tobacco, and drinking vodka. When you've served as long as I have,' he went on, turning to the ensign, 'you'll have also learned how to live. Why, gentlemen, do you know how he treats the orderlies?'

And Trosénko, dying with laughter, told us the whole story about the ensign and his orderly, though we had all heard it hundreds of times.

'Why do you look so like a rose, old chap?' continued he, addressing the ensign, who blushed, perspired, and smiled, so that it was pitiful to see him. 'Never mind, old chap! I was just like you once and now look what a fine fellow I am. You let a young fellow straight from Russia in here—haven't we seen them?—and he gets spasms or rheumatism or something; and here am I settled here, and it's my house and my bed and all, d'you see?'

And thereupon he drank another glass of vodka and looking fixedly at Kraft, said, 'Eh?'

'That is what I respect! Here's a genuine old Caucasian! Permit me to shake hands.'

And Kraft, pushing us all aside, forced his way to Trosénko and catching hold of his hand shook it with peculiar emotion.

Yes,' continued Kraft, 'we may say we have gone

¹ It is customary, especially among the peasants and soldiers, to wrap long strips of linen round the feet and legs instead of wearing stockings.

through every kind of experience here. In '45 you were present, Captain, were you not?—you remember the night between the 12th and 13th, when we spent the night knee-deep in mud and next day captured the barricades they had made of felled trees. I was attached to the commander-in-chief at the time and we took fifteen barricades that one day,—you remember, Captain?

Trosénko nodded affirmatively, stuck out his nether lip and screwed up his eyes.

'You see . . . ' began Kraft with great animation, making unsuitable gestures with his hands and addressing the major.

But the major, who had in all probability heard the story more than once, suddenly looked at the speaker with such dim, dull eyes that Kraft turned away from him and addressed me and Bólkhov, looking alternately at one and the other. But he did not give a single glance at Trosénko during the whole of his narration.

'Well then, you see, when we went out in the morning the commander-in-chief said to me, "Kraft, take those barricades!" Well, you know, a soldier's duty is not to reason—it's hand to cap, and "Yes, your Excellency!" and off. Only as we drew near the first barricade I turned and said to the soldiers, "Now then, lads, don't funk it but look sharp. If anyone hangs back I'll cut him down myself!" With Russian soldiers, you know, one has to speak straight out. Suddenly a bomb . . . I look, one soldier down, another, a third, . . . then bullets came whizzing . . . vzin! . . . vzin! . . . vzin! . . . "On!" I cry, "On, follow me!" Just as we got there I look and see a . . . a . . . you know . . . what do you call it?" and the narrator flourished his arms, trying to find the word he wanted.

'A scarp?' suggested Bólkhov.

'No . . . Ach! what is the word? Good heavens,

what is it? . . . A scarp!' he said quickly. 'So, "fix bayonets! Hurrah! ta-ra, ta-ta-ta!" not a sign of the enemy! Everybody was surprised, you know. Well, that's all right; we go on to the second barricade. Ah, that was a totally different matter. Our mettle was now up, you know. Just as we reached it I look and see the second barricade, and we could not advance. There was a what's-its-name . . . now what do you call it? Ach, what is it? . . .'

'Another scarp, perhaps,' I suggested.

'Not at all,' he said crossly: 'not a scarp but—oh dear, what do you call it?' and he made an awkward gesture with his hands. 'Oh, good heavens, what is it?' He seemed so distressed that one involuntarily wished to help him.

'A river, perhaps,' said Bólkhov.

'No, only a scarp! Hardly had we got down, when, will you believe it, such a hell of fire . . .'

At this moment someone outside the tent asked for me. It was Maksimov. And as after having heard the different histories of these two barricades there were still thirteen left, I was glad to seize the excuse to return to my platoon. Trosenko came out with me.

'It's all lies,' he said to me when we were a few steps from the hut; 'he never was near those barricades at all,' and Trosenko laughed so heartily that I, too, enjoyed the joke.

CHAPTER XIII

It was already dark and only the watch-fires dimly lit up the camp when, after the horses were groomed, I rejoined my men. A large stump lay smouldering on the charcoal. Only three men sat round it: Antónov, who was turning a little pot of *ryúbco*¹ on the fire; Zhdánov, who was dreamily poking the

¹ *Ryúbco*, soldier's food, made of soaked hard-tack and dripping.—L. T.

embers with a stick, and Chikin, with his pipe, which never would draw well. The rest had already lain down to sleep—some under the ammunition wagons, some on the hay, some by the camp-fires. By the dim light of the charcoal I could distinguish familiar backs, legs, and heads, and among the latter that of the young recruit who, drawn close to the fire, seemed to be already sleeping. Antónov made room for me. I sat down by him and lit a cigarette. The smell of mist and the smoke of damp wood filled the air and made one's eyes smart and, as before, a dank drizzle kept falling from the dismal sky.

One could hear the regular sound of snoring near by, the crackling of branches in the fire, a few words now and then, and the clattering of muskets among the infantry. The camp watch-fires glowed all around, lighting up within narrow circles the dark shadows of the soldiers near them. Where the light fell by the nearest fires I could distinguish the figures of naked soldiers waving their shirts close over the fire. There were still many who had not lain down, but moved and spoke, collected on a space of some eighty square yards; but the gloomy dull night gave a peculiar mysterious character to all this movement as if each one felt the dark silence and feared to break its calm monotony.

When I began to speak I felt that my voice sounded strange, and I discerned the same frame of mind reflected in the faces of all the soldiers sitting near me. I thought that before I joined them they had been talking about their wounded comrade, but it had not been so at all. Chikin had been telling them about receiving supplies at Tiflis and about the scamps there.

I have noticed always and everywhere, but especially in the Caucasus, the peculiar tact with which our soldiers avoid mentioning anything that might have a bad effect on a comrade's spirits. A Russian

soldier's spirit does not rest on easily inflammable enthusiasm which cools quickly like the courage of Southern nations; it is as difficult to inflame him as it is to depress him. He does not need scenes, speeches, war-cries, songs, and drums; on the contrary he needs quiet, order, and an absence of any affliction. In a Russian, a real Russian, soldier you will never find any bragging, swagger, or desire to befog or excite himself in time of danger; on the contrary, modesty, simplicity, and a capacity for seeing in peril something quite else than the danger, are the distinctive features of his character. I have seen a soldier wounded in the leg, who in the first instant thought only of the hole in his new sheepskin cloak; and an artillery outrider who, creeping from beneath a horse that was killed under him, began unbuckling the girths to save the saddle. Who does not remember the incident at the siege of Gergebel when the fuse of a loaded bomb caught fire in the laboratory and an artillery sergeant ordered two soldiers to take the bomb and run to throw it into the ditch, and how the soldiers did not run to the nearest spot by the colonel's tent, which stood over the ditch, but took it farther on so as not to wake the gentlemen asleep in the tent and were consequently both blown to pieces? I remember also how, in the expedition of 1852, something led a young soldier while in action to say he thought the platoon would never escape, and how the whole platoon angrily attacked him for such evil words which they did not like even to repeat. And now, when the thought of Velenchúk must have been in the mind of each one and when we might expect Tartars to steal up at any moment and fire a volley at us, everyone listened to Chíkin's sprightly stories and no one referred either to the day's action, or to the present danger, or to the wounded man; as if it had all happened goodness knows how long ago or had never happened at all. But it seemed to me that

their faces were rather sterner than usual, that they did not listen to Chikin so very attentively, and that even Chikin himself felt he was not being listened to, but talked for the sake of talking.

Maksimov joined us at the fire and sat down beside me. Chikin made room for him, stopped speaking, and started sucking at his pipe once more.

'The infantry have been sending to the camp for vodka,' said Maksimov after a considerable silence; 'they have just returned.' He spat into the fire. 'The sergeant says they saw our man.'

• 'Is he alive?' asked Antónov, turning the pot.

'No, he's dead.'

The young recruit suddenly raised his head in the little red cap, looked intently for a minute over the fire at Maksimov and at me, then quickly let his head sink again and wrapped himself in his cloak.

'There now, it wasn't for naught that death had laid its hand on him when I had to wake him in the "park" this morning,' said Antónov.

'Nonsense!' said Zhdánov, turning the smouldering log, and all were silent.

Then, amid the general silence, came the report of a gun from the camp behind us. Our drummers beat an answering tattoo. When the last vibration ceased Zhdánov rose first, taking off his cap. We all followed his example.

Through the deep silence of the night rose an harmonious choir of manly voices:

'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one.'

'We had a man in '45 who was wounded in the same place,' said Antónov when we had put on our

caps and again sat down by the fire. 'We carried him about with us on a gun for two days—do you remember Shévchenko, Zhdánov?—and then we just left him there under a tree.'

At this moment an infantryman with tremendous whiskers and moustaches came up to our fire, carrying a musket and pouch.

'Give me a light for my pipe, comrades,' said he.

'All right, smoke away: there's fire enough,' remarked Chíkin.

'I suppose it's about Dargo¹ you are telling, comrade,' said the infantry soldier to Antónov.

'Yes, about Dargo in '45,' Antónov replied.

The infantryman shook his head, screwed up his eyes, and sat down on his heels near us.

'Yes, all sorts of things happened there,' he remarked.

'Why did you leave him behind?' I asked Antónov.

'He was suffering a lot with his stomach. As long as we halted it was all right, but as soon as we moved on he screamed aloud and asked for God's sake to be left behind—but we felt it a pity. But when *he* began to give it us hot, killed three of our men from the guns and an officer besides and we somehow got separated from our battery. . . . It was such a go! We thought we shouldn't get our guns away. It was muddy and no mistake!'

'The mud was worst under the Indéysky² Mountain,' remarked one of the soldiers.

'Yes, it was there he got more worse! So we considered it with Anóshenka—he was an old artillery sergeant. "Now really he can't live and he's asking for God's sake to be left behind; let us leave him here." So we decided. There was a tree, such a

¹ Dargo, in the Terek Territory, was the head-quarters of Shamyl until 1845.

² The soldier miscalls the Andíysky chain of mountains 'Indéysky,' apparently connecting them with India.

branchy one, growing there. Well, we took some soaked hard-tack Zhdánov had, and put it near him, leant him against the tree, put a clean shirt on him, and said good-bye,—all as it should be—and left him.'

'And was he a good soldier?'

'Yes, he was all right as a soldier,' remarked Zhdánov.

'And what became of him God only knows,' continued Antónov; 'many of the likes of us perished there.'

'What, at Dargo?' said the infantryman as he rose, scraping out his pipe and again half-closing his eyes and shaking his head; 'all sorts of things happened there.'

And he left us.

'And have we many still in the battery who were at Dargo?' I asked.

'Many? Why, there's Zhdánov, myself, Patsán who is now on furlough, and there may be six others, not more.'

'And why's our Patsán holiday-making all this time?' said Chikin, stretching out his legs and lying down with his head on a log. 'I reckon he's been away getting on for a year.'

'And you, have you had your year at home?' I asked Zhdánov.

'No, I didn't go,' he answered unwillingly.

'You see, it's all right to go,' said Antónov, 'if they're well off at home or if you are yourself fit to work; then it's tempting to go and they're glad to see you.'

'But where's the use of going when one's one of two brothers?' continued Zhdánov. 'It's all they can do to get their bread; how should they feed a soldier like me? I'm no help to them after twenty-five years' service. And who knows whether they're alive still?'

'Haven't you ever written?' I asked.

'Yes, indeed! I wrote two letters, but never had an answer. Either they're dead, or simply won't write because they're living in poverty themselves; so where's the good?'

'And is it long since you wrote?'

'I wrote last when we returned from Dargo . . . Won't you sing us "The Birch-Tree"?' he said, turning to Antónov, who sat leaning his elbows on his knees and humming a song.

Antónov began to sing 'The Birch-Tree'.

'This is the song Daddy Zhdánov likes most best of all,' said Chikin to me in a whisper, pulling at my cloak. 'Sometimes he right down weeps when Philip Antónych sings it.'

Zhdánov at first sat quite motionless with eyes fixed on the glimmering embers, and his face, lit up by the reddish light, seemed very gloomy; then his jaws below his ears began to move faster and faster, and at last he rose, and spreading out his cloak, lay down in the shadow behind the fire. Either it was his tossing and groaning as he settled down to sleep, or it may have been the effect of Velenchúk's death and of the dull weather, but it really seemed to me that he was crying.

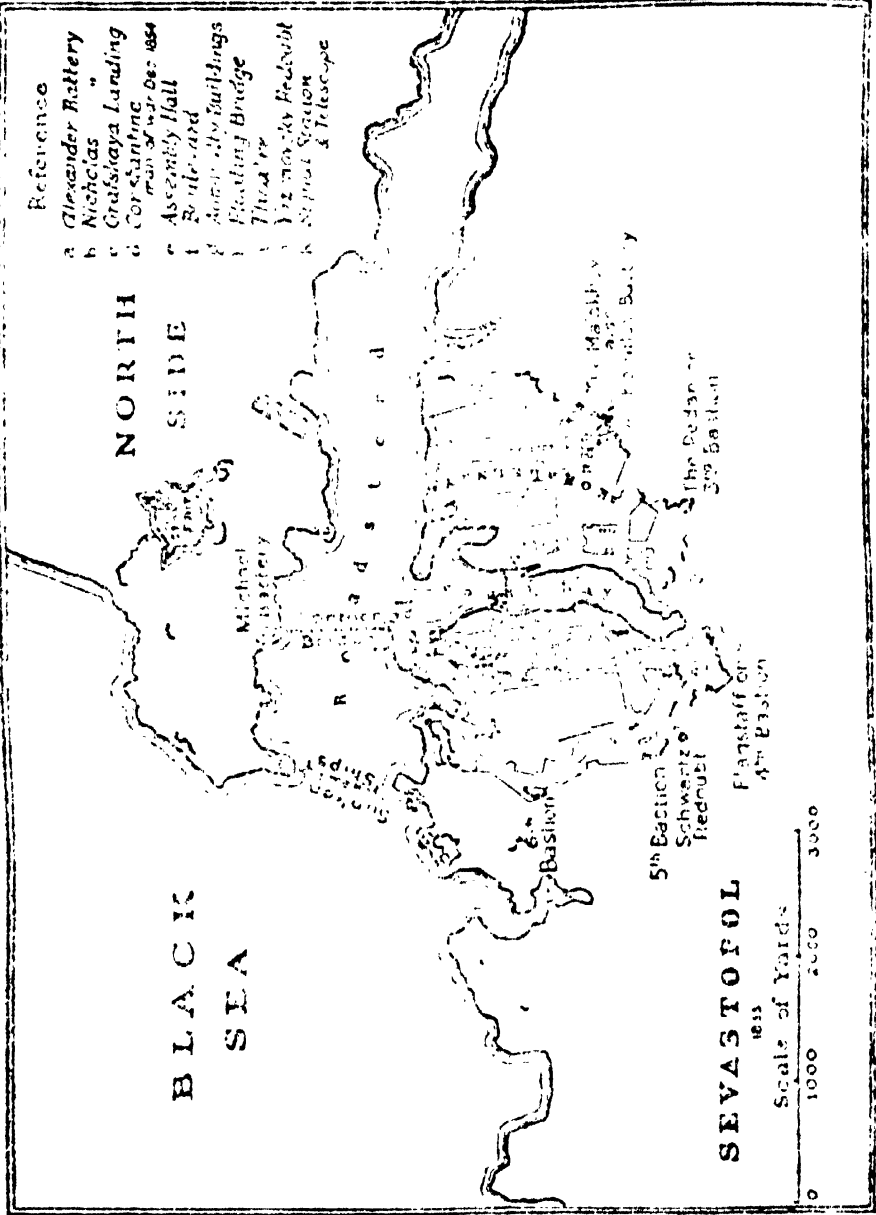
The bottom of the charred log, bursting every now and then into flames, lit up Antónov's figure with his grey moustaches, red face, and the medals on the cloak that he had thrown over his shoulders, or it lit up someone's boots, head, or back. The same gloomy drizzle fell from above, the air was still full of moisture and smoke, all around were the same bright spots of fires, now dying down, and amid the general stillness came the mournful sound of Antónov's song; and when that stopped for an instant the faint nocturnal sounds of the camp—snoring, clanking of sentries' muskets, voices speaking in low tones—took part.

'Second watch! Makatyúk and Zhdánov!' cried Maksimov.

Antónov stopped singing. Zhdánov rose, sighed, stepped across the log, and went slowly towards the guns.

15 June 1855.

SEVASTOPOL



SEVASTOPOL IN DECEMBER 1854

THE early dawn is just beginning to colour the horizon above the Sapún Hill. The dark blue surface of the sea has already thrown off the gloom of night and is only awaiting the first ray of the sun to begin sparkling merrily. A current of cold misty air blows from the bay; there is no snow on the hard black ground, but the sharp morning frost crunches under your feet and makes your face tingle. The distant, incessant murmur of the sea, occasionally interrupted by the reverberating boom of cannon from Sevastopol, alone infringes the stillness of the morning. All is quiet on the ships. It strikes eight bells.

On the north side the activity of day is beginning gradually to replace the quiet of night: here some soldiers with clanking muskets pass to relieve the guard, there a doctor is already hurrying to the hospital, and there a soldier, having crept out of his dug-out, washes his weather-beaten face with icy water and then turning to the reddening horizon says his prayers, rapidly crossing himself: a creaking Tartar cart drawn by camels crawls past on its way to the cemetery to bury the blood-stained dead with which it is loaded almost to the top. As you approach the harbour you are struck by the peculiar smell of coal-smoke, manure, danipness, and meat. Thousands of different objects are lying in heaps by the harbour: firewood, meat, gabions, sacks of flour, iron, and so on. Soldiers of various regiments, some carrying bags and muskets and others empty-handed, are crowded together here, smoking, quarrelling, and hauling heavy loads onto the steamer which lies close to the wharf, its funnel smoking. Private boats crowded with all sorts of people—soldiers, sailors, merchants, and women—keep arriving at the landing stage or leaving it.

'To the Gráfskaya, your Honour? Please to get in!' two or three old salts offer you their services, getting out of their boats.

You choose the one nearest to you, step across the half-decayed carcass of a bay horse that lies in the mud close to the boat, and pass on towards the rudder. You push off from the landing stage, and around you is the sea, now glittering in the morning sunshine. In front of you the old sailor in his camel-hair coat, and a flaxen-haired boy, silently and steadily ply the oars. You gaze at the enormous striped ships scattered far and wide over the bay, at the ships' boats that move about over the sparkling azure like small black dots, at the opposite bank where the handsome light-coloured buildings of the town are lit up by the rosy rays of the morning sun, at the foaming white line by the breakwater and around the sunken vessels, the black tops of whose masts here and there stand mournfully out of the water, at the enemy's fleet looming on the crystal horizon of the sea, and at the foaming and bubbling wash of the oars. You listen to the steady sound of voices that reaches you across the water, and to the majestic sound of firing from Sevastopol which as it seems to you is growing more intense.

It is impossible for some feeling of heroism and pride not to penetrate your soul at the thought that you, too, are in Sevastopol, and for the blood not to run faster in your veins.

'Straight past the *Kistentin*,¹ your Honour!' the old sailor tells you, turning round to verify the direction towards the right in which you are steering.

'And she's still got all her guns!'² says the flaxen-headed boy, examining the ship in passing.

'Well, of course. She's a new one. Kornflov lived

¹ The vessel, the *Constantine*.

² The guns were removed from most of the ships for use on the fortifications.

on her,' remarks the old seaman, also looking up at the ship.

'Look where it's burst!' the boy says after a long silence, watching a small white cloud of dispersing smoke that has suddenly appeared high above the South Bay accompanied by the sharp sound of a bursting bomb.

'That's *him* firing from the new battery to-day,' adds the old seaman, calmly spitting on his hand. 'Now then, pull away Mishka! Let's get ahead of that long-boat.' And your skiff travels faster over the broad swell of the roadstead, gets ahead of the heavy long-boat laden with sacks and unsteadily and clumsily rowed by soldiers, and making its way among all sorts of boats moored there, is made fast to the Gráfsky landing.

Crowds of grey-clad soldiers, sailors in black, and gaily-dressed women, throng noisily about the quay. Here are women selling buns, Russian peasants with samovars¹ are shouting, 'Hot sbíten!'.² and here too on the very first steps lie rusty cannon-balls, bombs, grape-shot, and cannon of various sizes. A little farther on is a large open space where some enormous beams are lying, together with gun carriages and sleeping soldiers. Horses, carts, cannon, green ammunition wagons, and stacked muskets, are standing there. Soldiers, sailors, officers, women, children, and tradespeople, are moving about, carts loaded with hay, sacks, and casks, are passing, and now and then a Cossack, a mounted officer, or a general in a vehicle. To the right is a street closed by a barricade on which some small guns are mounted in embrasures and beside which sits a sailor smoking a pipe. To the left is a

¹ The samovár, or 'self-boiler', is an urn in which water can be boiled and kept hot without any other fire having to be lit.

² A hot drink made with treacle and lemon, or honey and spice.

handsome building with Roman figures engraved on its frontage and before which soldiers are standing with blood-stained stretchers. Everywhere you will see the unpleasant indications of a war camp. Your first impressions will certainly be most disagreeable: the strange mixture of camp-life and town-life—of a fine town and a dirty bivouac—is not only ugly but looks like horrible disorder: it will even seem to you that every one is scared, in a commotion, and at a loss what to do. But look more closely at the faces of these people moving about around you and you will get a very different impression. Take for instance this convoy soldier muttering something to himself as he goes to water those three bay horses, and doing it all so quietly that he evidently will not get lost in this motley crowd which does not even exist as far as he is concerned, but will do his job be it what it may—watering horses or hauling guns—as calmly, self-confidently, and unconcernedly as if it were all happening in Túla or Saránsk. You will read the same thing on the face of this officer passing by in immaculate white gloves, on the face of the sailor who sits smoking on the barricade, on the faces of the soldiers waiting in the portico of what used to be the Assembly Hall, and on the face of that girl who, afraid of getting her pink dress muddy, is jumping from stone to stone as she crosses the street.

Yes, disenchantment certainly awaits you on entering Sevastopol for the first time. You will look in vain in any of these faces for signs of disquiet, perplexity, or even of enthusiasm, determination, or readiness for death—there is nothing of the kind. What you see are ordinary people quietly occupied with ordinary activities, so that perhaps you may reproach yourself for having felt undue enthusiasm and may doubt the justice of the ideas you had formed of the heroism of the defenders of Sevastopol, based on the tales and descriptions and sights and

sounds seen and heard from the North Side. But before yielding to such doubts go to the bastions and see the defenders of Sevastopol at the very place of the defence, or better still go straight into that building opposite which was once the Sevastopol Assembly Rooms and in the portico of which stand soldiers with stretchers. There you will see the defenders of Sevastopol and will see terrible and lamentable, solemn and amusing, but astounding and soul-elevating sights.

You enter the large Assembly Hall. As soon as you open the door you are struck by the sight and smell of forty or fifty amputation and most seriously wounded cases, some in cots but most of them on the floor. Do not trust the feeling that checks you at the threshold, it is a wrong feeling. Go on, do not be ashamed of seeming to have come to *look* at the sufferers, do not hesitate to go up and speak to them. Sufferers like to see a sympathetic human face, like to speak of their sufferings, and to hear words of love and sympathy. You pass between the rows of beds and look for a face less stern and full of suffering, which you feel you can approach and speak to.

'Where are you wounded?' you inquire hesitatingly and timidly of an emaciated old soldier who is sitting up in his cot and following you with a kindly look as if inviting you to approach him. I say 'inquire timidly' because, besides strong sympathy, sufferings seem to inspire a dread of offending, as well as a great respect for him who endures them.

'In the leg,' the soldier replies, and at the same moment you yourself notice from the fold of his blanket that one leg is missing from above the knee. 'Now, God be thanked,' he adds, 'I am ready to leave the hospital.'

'Is it long since you were wounded?'

'Well, it's over five weeks now, your Honour.'

'And are you still in pain?'

'No, I'm not in any pain now; only when it's bad weather I seem to feel a pain in the calf, else it's all right.'

'And how did it happen that you were wounded?'

'It was on the Fifth Bastion, your Honour, at the first *bondbarment*. I trained the gun and was stepping across to the next embrasure, when *he* hits me in the leg, just as if I had stumbled into a hole. I look—and the leg is gone.'

'Do you mean to say you felt no pain the first moment?'

'Nothing much, only as if something hot had shoved against my leg.'

'And afterwards?'

'And nothing much afterwards except when they began to draw the skin together, then it did seem to smart. The chief thing, your Honour, is *not to think*; if you don't think it's nothing much. It's most because of a man thinking.'

At this moment a woman in a grey striped dress and with a black kerchief tied round her head comes up to you and enters into your conversation with the sailor. She begins telling you about him, about his sufferings, the desperate condition he was in for four weeks, and of how when he was wounded he stopped his stretcher-bearers that he might see a volley fired from our battery; and how the Grand Duke spoke to him and gave him twenty-five rubles, and how he had told them he wanted to go back to the bastion to teach the young ones, if he could not himself work any longer. As she says all this in a breath, the woman keeps looking now at you and now at the sailor, who having turned away is picking lint on his pillow as if not listening, and her eyes shine with a peculiar rapture.

'She's my missus, your Honour!' he remarks with a look that seems to say: 'You must excuse her. It's a woman's way to talk nonsense.'

You begin now to understand the defenders of Sevastopol, and for some reason begin to feel ashamed of yourself in the presence of this man. You want to say too much, in order to express your sympathy and admiration, but you can't find the right words and are dissatisfied with those that occur to you, and so you silently bow your head before this taciturn and unconscious grandeur and firmness of spirit—which is ashamed to have its worth revealed.

'Well, may God help you to get well soon,' you say to him, and turn to another patient who is lying on the floor apparently awaiting death in unspeakable torment.

He is a fair-haired man with a puffy pale face. He is lying on his back with his left arm thrown back in a position that indicates cruel suffering. His hoarse breathing comes with difficulty through his parched, open mouth; his leaden blue eyes are rolled upwards, and what remains of his bandaged right arm is thrust out from under his tumbled blanket. The oppressive smell of mortified flesh assails you yet more strongly, and the feverish inner heat in all the sufferer's limbs seems to penetrate you also.

'Is he unconscious?' you ask the woman who follows you and looks at you kindly as at someone akin to her.

'No, he can still hear, but not at all well,' and she adds in a whisper: 'I gave him some tea to drink to-day—what if he is a stranger, one must have pity—but he hardly drank any of it.'

'How do you feel?' you ask him.

The wounded man turns his eyes at the sound of your voice, but neither sees nor understands you.

'My heart's on fire,' he mumbles.

A little farther on you see an old soldier who is changing his shirt. His face and body are a kind of reddish brown and as gaunt as a skeleton. Nothing is left of one of his arms. It has been amputated at the shoulder. He sits up firmly, he is convalescent;

but his dull, heavy look, his terrible emaciation and the wrinkles on his face, show that the best part of this man's life has been consumed by his sufferings.

In a cot on the opposite side you see a woman's pale, delicate face, full of suffering, a hectic flush suffusing her cheek.

'That's the wife of one of our sailors: she was hit in the leg by a bomb on the 5th.'¹ your guide will tell you. 'She was taking her husband's dinner to him at the bastion.'

'Amputated?'

'Yes, cut off above the knee.'

Now, if your nerves are strong, go in at the door to the left; it is there they bandage and operate. There you will see doctors with pale, gloomy faces, and arms red with blood up to the elbows, busy at a bed on which a wounded man lies under chloroform. His eyes are open and he utters, as if in delirium, incoherent but sometimes simple and pathetic words. The doctors are engaged on the horrible but beneficent work of amputation. You will see the sharp curved knife enter the healthy white flesh; you will see the wounded man come back to life with terrible, heart-rending screams and curses. You will see the doctor's assistant toss the amputated arm into a corner and in the same room you will see another wounded man on a stretcher watching the operation, and writhing and groaning not so much from physical pain as from the mental torture of anticipation. You will see ghastly sights that will rend your soul; you will see war not with its orderly beautiful and brilliant ranks, its music and beating drums, its waving banners, its generals on prancing horses, but war in its real aspect of blood, suffering, and death. . . .

¹ The first bombardment of Sevastopol was on the 5th of October 1854, old style, that is, the 17th of October, new style.

On coming out of this house of pain you will be sure to experience a sense of relief, you will draw deeper breaths of the fresh air, and rejoice in the consciousness of your own health. Yet the contemplation of those sufferings will have made you realize your own insignificance, and you will go calmly and unhesitatingly to the bastions.

'What matters the death and suffering of so insignificant a worm as I, compared to so many deaths, so much suffering?' But the sight of the clear sky, the brilliant sun, the beautiful town, the open church, and the soldiers moving in all directions, will soon bring your spirit back to its normal state of frivolity, its petty cares and absorption in the present. You may meet the funeral procession of an officer as it leaves the church, the pink coffin accompanied by waving banners and music, and the sound of firing from the bastions may reach your ears. But these things will not bring back your former thoughts. The funeral will seem a very beautiful military pageant, the sounds very beautiful warlike sounds; and neither to these sights nor these sounds will you attach the clear and personal sense of suffering and death that came to you in the hospital.

Passing the church and the barricade you enter that part of the town where everyday life is most active. On both sides of the street hang the signboards¹ of shops and restaurants. Tradesmen, women with bonnets or kerchiefs on their heads, dandified officers—everything speaks of the firmness, self-confidence, and security of the inhabitants.

If you care to hear the conversation of army and navy officers, enter the restaurant on the right. There you are sure to hear them talk about last night, about Fanny, about the affair of the

¹ Among a population largely illiterate, the signboards were usually pictorial. The bakers showed loaves and rolls, the bootmakers boots and shoes, and so on.

24th,' about how dear and badly served the cutlets are, and how such and such of their comrades have been killed.

'Things were confoundedly bad at our place to-day!' a fair beardless little naval officer with a green knitted scarf round his neck says in a bass voice.

'Where was that?' asks another.

'Oh, in the Fourth Bastion,' answers the young officer, and at the words 'Fourth Bastion' you will certainly look more attentively and even with a certain respect at this fair-complexioned officer. The excessive freedom of his manner, his gesticulations, and his loud voice and laugh, which had appeared to you impudent before, now seem to indicate that peculiarly combative frame of mind noticeable in some young men after they have been in danger, but all the same you expect him to say how bad the bombs and bullets made things in the Fourth Bastion. Not at all! It was the mud that made things so bad. 'One can scarcely get to the battery,' he continues, pointing to his boots, which are muddy even above the calves. 'And I have lost my best gunner,' says another, 'hit right in the forehead.' 'Who's that? Mitúkhin?' 'No . . . but am I ever to have my veal, you rascal?' he adds, addressing the waiter. 'Not Mitúkhin but Abrámov—such a fine fellow. He was out in six sallies.'

At another corner of the table sit two infantry officers with plates of cutlets and peas before them and a bottle of sour Crimean wine called 'Bordeaux'. One of them, a young man with a red collar and two little stars on his cloak, is talking to the other, who has a black collar and no stars, about the Alma affair. The former has already been drinking and the pauses he makes, the indecision in his face—expressive of his doubt of being believed—and especially the fact

* The 24th October o.s. = 5th November n.s., the date of the Battle of Inkerman.

that his own part in the account he is giving is too important and the thing is too terrible, show that he is diverging considerably from the strict truth. But you do not care much for stories of this kind, which will long be current all over Russia; you want to get quickly to the bastions, especially to that Fourth Bastion about which you have been told so many and such different tales. When anyone says: 'I am going to the Fourth Bastion' he always betrays a slight agitation or too marked an indifference; if anyone wishes to chaff you, he says: 'You should be sent to the Fourth Bastion.' When you meet someone carried on a stretcher and ask, 'Where from?' the answer usually is, 'From the Fourth Bastion'. Two quite different opinions are current concerning this terrible bastion¹: that of those who have never been there and who are convinced it is a certain grave for any one who goes, and that of those who, like the fair-complexioned midshipman, live there and who when speaking of the Fourth Bastion will tell you whether it is dry or muddy, whether it is cold or warm in the dug-outs, and so forth.

During the half-hour you have spent in the restaurant the weather has changed. The mist that spread over the sea has gathered into dull grey moist clouds which hide the sun, and a kind of dismal sleet showers down and wets the roofs, the pavements, and the soldiers' overcoats.

Passing another barricade you go through some doors to the right and up a broad street. Beyond this barricade the houses on both sides of the street are unoccupied: there are no sign-boards, the doors are boarded up, the windows smashed, here a corner of the wall is knocked down and there a roof is broken in. The buildings look like old veterans who have borne much sorrow and privation; they even seem to gaze proudly and somewhat contemptuously at

¹ Called by the English the 'Flagstaff Bastion'.

you. On the road you stumble over cannon-balls that lie about, and into holes made in the stony ground by bombs and full of water. You meet and overtake detachments of soldiers. Cossacks, officers, and occasionally a woman or a child; only it will not be a woman wearing a bonnet, but a sailor's wife wearing an old cloak and soldiers' boots. After you have descended a little slope farther down the same street you will no longer see any houses, but only ruined walls amid strange heaps of bricks, boards, clay, and beams, and before you, up a steep hill, you see a black untidy space cut up by ditches. This space you are approaching is the Fourth Bastion. . . . Here you will meet still fewer people and no women at all, the soldiers walk briskly by, there are traces of blood on the road, and you are sure to meet four soldiers carrying a stretcher and on the stretcher probably a pale yellow face and a blood-stained overcoat. If you ask, 'Where is he wounded?' the bearers without looking at you will answer crossly, 'in the leg' or 'in the arm' if the man is not severely wounded, or will remain sternly silent if no head is raised on the stretcher and the man is either dead or seriously wounded.

The whiz of cannon-ball or bomb near by impresses you unpleasantly as you ascend the hill, and the meaning of the sounds is very different from what it seemed to be when they reached you in the town. Some peaceful and joyous memory will suddenly flash through your mind; self-consciousness begins to supersede the activity of your observation: you are less attentive to all that is around you and a disagreeable feeling of indecision suddenly seizes you. But silencing this despicable little voice that has suddenly made itself heard within you at the sight of danger—especially after seeing a soldier run past you laughing, waving his arms, and slipping downhill through the yellow mud—you involuntarily expand your chest,

raise your head higher, and clamber up the slippery clay hill. You have climbed only a little way before bullets begin to whiz past you to the right and left, and you will perhaps consider whether you had not better walk inside the trench which runs parallel to the road; but the trench is full of such yellow liquid stinking mud, more than knee deep, that you are sure to choose the road, especially as *everybody* does so. After walking a couple of hundred yards you come to a muddy place much cut up, surrounded by gabions, cellars, platforms, and dug-outs, and on which large cast-iron cannon are mounted and cannon-balls lie piled in orderly heaps. It all seems placed without any plan, aim, connexion, or order. Here a group of sailors are sitting in the battery; here in the middle of the open space, half sunk in mud, lies a shattered cannon; and there a foot-soldier is crossing the battery, drawing his feet with difficulty out of the sticky mud. Everywhere, on all sides and all about, you see fragments of bombs, unexploded bombs, cannon balls, and various traces of an encampment, all sunk in the liquid, sticky mud. You think you hear the thud of a cannon-ball not far off and you seem to hear the different sounds of bullets all around, some humming like bees, some whistling, and some rapidly flying past with a shrill screech like the string of some instrument. You hear the dreadful boom of a shot that sends a shock all through you and seems most terrible.

‘So this is the Fourth Bastion! This is that terrible, truly dreadful spot!’ So you think, experiencing a slight feeling of pride and a strong feeling of suppressed fear. But you are mistaken, this is not the Fourth Bastion yet. This is only Yazónovsky Redoubt—comparatively a very safe and not at all dreadful place. To get to the Fourth Bastion you must turn to the right along that narrow trench where a foot-soldier has just passed, stooping down. In this

trench you may again meet men with stretchers and perhaps a sailor or a soldier with a spade. You will see the mouths of mines, dug-outs into which only two men can crawl, and there you will see the Cossacks of the Black Sea battalions changing their boots, eating, smoking their pipes, and in short living. And again you will see the same stinking mud, the traces of camp life and cast-iron refuse of every shape and form. When you have gone some three hundred steps more you will come out at another battery—a flat space with many holes, surrounded with gabions filled with earth, and cannons on platforms, and the whole walled in with earthworks. Here you will perhaps see four or five soldiers playing cards under shelter of the breastworks, and a naval officer, noticing that you are a stranger and inquisitive, will be pleased to show you his 'household' and everything that can interest you. This officer sits on a cannon rolling a yellow cigarette so composedly, walks from one embrasure to another so quietly, talks to you so calmly and with such an absence of affectation, that in spite of the bullets whizzing around you oftener than before you yourself grow cooler, question him carefully and listen to his stories. He will tell you (but only if you ask) about the bombardment on the 5th of October; will tell you that only one gun of his battery remained usable and only eight gunners of the crew were left, and that nevertheless he fired all his guns next morning, the 6th. He will tell you how a bomb dropped into one of the dug-outs and knocked over eleven sailors; from an embrasure he will show you the enemy's batteries and trenches which are here not more than seventy-five to eighty-five yards distant. I am afraid though, that when you lean out of the embrasure to have a look at the enemy the whiz of the flying bullets will hinder you from seeing anything, but if you do see anything you will be much surprised to find that this whitish stone wall—which is so near

you and from which puffs of white smoke keep bursting—is the enemy: *he*, as the soldiers and sailors say.

It is even very likely that the naval officer from vanity, or merely for a little recreation, will wish to show you some firing. ‘Call the gunner and crew to the cannon!’ and fourteen sailors—their hob-nailed boots clattering on the platform, one putting his pipe in his pocket, another still chewing a rusk—will quickly and cheerfully man the gun and begin loading. Look well into these faces and note the bearing and carriage of these men. In every wrinkle of that tanned face with its high cheek-bones, in every muscle, in the breadth of those shoulders, the thickness of those legs in their enormous boots, in every movement, quiet, firm, and deliberate, can be seen the chief characteristic of the strength of the Russian—his simplicity and obstinacy.

Suddenly the most fearful roar strikes not only your ears but your whole being and makes you shudder all over. It is followed by the whistle of the departing ball, and a thick cloud of powder-smoke envelops you, the platform, and the black moving figures of the sailors. You will hear various comments made by the sailors concerning this shot of ours and you will notice their animation, the evidences of a feeling you had not perhaps expected: the feeling of animosity and thirst for vengeance which lies hidden in each man’s soul. You will hear joyful exclamations: ‘It’s gone right into the embrasure! It’s killed two, I think. . . . There, they’re carrying them off!’ ‘And now *he*’s riled and will send one this way,’ some one remarks; and really, soon after, you will see before you a flash and some smoke; the sentinel standing on the breastwork will call out ‘Ca-n-non!’, and then a ball will whiz past you and bury itself in the earth, throwing out a circle of stones and mud. The commander of the battery will be irritated by this shot and will give orders to fire another and another cannon, the enemy

will reply in like manner, and you will experience interesting sensations and see interesting sights. The sentinel will again call 'Cannon!' and you will have the same sound and shock, and the mud will be splashed around as before. Or he will call out 'Mortar!' and you will hear the regular and rather pleasant whistle—which it is difficult to connect with the thought of anything dreadful—of a bomb; you will hear this whistle coming nearer and faster towards you, then you will see a black ball, feel the shock as it strikes the ground, and will hear the ringing explosion. The bomb will fly apart into whizzing and shrieking fragments, stones will rattle in the air, and you will be bespattered with mud.

At these sounds you will experience a strange feeling of mingled pleasure and fear. At the moment you know the shot is flying towards you, you are sure to imagine that it will kill you, but a feeling of pride will support you and no one will know of the knife that cuts at your heart. But when the shot has flown past without hitting you, you revive and are seized, though only for a moment, by an inexpressibly joyful emotion, so that you feel a peculiar delight in the danger—in this game of life and death—and wish the bombs and balls to fall nearer and nearer to you.

But again the sentinel in his loud gruff voice shouts 'Mortar!', again a whistle, a fall, an explosion; and mingled with this last you are startled by a man's groans. You approach the wounded sailor just as the stretchers are brought. Covered with blood and dirt he presents a strange, scarcely human, appearance. Part of his breast has been torn away. For the first few moments only terror and the kind of feigned, premature, look of suffering, common to men in this state, appear on his mud-besprinkled face, but when the stretcher is brought and he himself lies down on it on his healthy side you notice that his expression changes. His eyes shine more brightly, his teeth are

clenched, he raises his head higher with difficulty, and when the stretcher is lifted he stops the bearers for a moment and turning to his comrades says with an effort, in a trembling voice, 'Forgive me, brothers!'¹ He wishes to say more, something pathetic, but only repeats, 'Forgive me, brothers!' At this moment a sailor approaches him, places the cap on the head the wounded man holds up towards him, and then placidly swinging his arms returns quietly to his cannon.

'That's the way with seven or eight every day,' the naval officer remarks to you, answering the look of horror on your face, and he yawns as he rolls another yellow cigarette.

So now you have seen the defenders of Sevastopol where they are defending it, and somehow you return with a tranquil heightened spirit, paying no heed to the balls and bombs whose whistle accompanies you all the way to the ruined theatre. The principal thought you have brought away with you is a joyous conviction of the strength of the Russian people; and this conviction you have gained not by looking at all those traverses, breastworks, cunningly interlaced trenches, mines, cannon, one after another, of which you could make nothing; but from the eyes, words, and actions—in short from seeing what is called the 'spirit'—of the defenders of Sevastopol. What they do is all done so simply, with so little effort, that you feel convinced that they could do a hundred times as much. . . . You understand that the feeling which actuates them is not that petty ambition or forgetfulness which you yourself experienced, but something more powerful, which has made them able to live so

¹ 'Forgive me' and 'farewell' are almost interchangeable expressions in Russian. 'Good-bye' (*prostcháyte*) etymologically means 'forgive'. The form (*proshíte*) here used, however, means primarily 'forgive me'.

quietly under the flying balls, exposed to a hundred chances of death besides the one all men are subject to—and this amid conditions of constant toil, lack of sleep, and dirt. Men could not accept such terrible conditions of life for the sake of a cross, or promotion, or because of a threat: there must be some other and higher motive power.

It is only now that the tales of the early days of the siege of Sevastopol are no longer beautiful historical legends for you, but have become realities: the tales of the time when it was not fortified, when there was no army to defend it, when it seemed a physical impossibility to retain it and yet there was not the slightest idea of abandoning it to the enemy—of the time when Kornilov, that hero worthy of ancient Greece, making his round of the troops, said, ‘Lads, we will die, but will not surrender Sevastopol!’ and our Russians, incapable of phrase-making, replied, ‘We will die! Hurrah!’ You will clearly recognize in the men you have just seen those heroes who gladly prepared for death and whose spirits did not flag during those dismal days, but rose.

The evening is closing in. Just before setting, the sun emerges from behind the grey clouds that covered the sky and suddenly lights up with its bright red glow the purple clouds, the greenish sea with the ships and boats rocking on its broad even swell, the white buildings of the town, and the people moving in the streets. The sound of some old valse played by a military band on the boulevard is carried across the water and mingles strangely with the sound of firing on the bastions.

Sevastopol, 25 April o.s. 1855.

SEVASTOPOL IN MAY 1855

I

Six months have passed since the first cannon-ball went whistling from the bastions of Sevastopol and threw up the earth of the enemy's entrenchments. Since then bullets, balls, and bombs by the thousand have flown continually from the bastions to the entrenchments and from the entrenchments to the bastions, and above them the angel of death has hovered unceasingly.

Thousands of human ambitions have had time to be mortified, thousands to be gratified and extend, thousands to be lulled to rest in the arms of death. What numbers of pink coffins and linen palls! And still the same sounds from the bastions fill the air; the French still look from their camp with involuntary trepidation and fear at the yellowy earth of the bastions of Sevastopol and count the embrasures from which the iron cannon frown fiercely; as before, through the fixed telescope on the elevation of the signal-station the pilot still watches the bright-coloured figures of the French, their batteries, their tents, their columns on the green hill, and the puffs of smoke that rise from the entrenchments; and as before, crowds of different men, with a still greater variety of desires, stream with the same ardour from many parts of the world to this fatal spot. But the question the diplomats did not settle still remains unsettled by powder and blood.

II

A regimental band was playing on the boulevard near the pavilion in the besieged town of Sevastopol, and crowds of women and military men strolled along the paths making holiday. The bright spring sun had risen in the morning above the English entrenchments,

had reached the bastions, then the town and the Nicholas Barracks, shining with equal joy on all, and was now sinking down to the distant blue sea which, rocking with an even motion, glittered with silvery light.

A tall infantry officer with a slight stoop, drawing on a presentable though not very white glove, passed out of the gate of one of the small sailors' houses built on the left side of the Morskáya Street and gazing thoughtfully at the ground ascended the hill towards the boulevard. The expression of his plain face did not reveal much intellectual power, but rather good-nature, common sense, honesty, and an inclination to respectability. He was badly built, and seemed rather shy and awkward in his movements. His cap was nearly new, a gold watch-chain showed from under his thin cloak of a rather peculiar lilac shade, and he wore trousers with foot-straps, and clean, shiny calf-skin boots. He might have been a German (but that his features indicated his purely Russian origin), an adjutant, or a regimental quartermaster (but in that case he would have worn spurs), or an officer transferred from the cavalry or the Guards for the duration of the war. He was in fact an officer who had exchanged from the cavalry, and as he ascended the hill towards the boulevard he was thinking of a letter he had received from a former comrade now retired from the army, a landed proprietor in the government of T—, and of his great friend, the pale, blue-eyed Natásha, that comrade's wife. He recalled a part of the letter where his comrade wrote:

'When we receive the *Invalidé*,¹ Púpka' (so the retired Uhlan called his wife) 'rushes headlong into the hall, seizes the paper, and runs with it to a seat in the arbour or the drawing-room—in which, you remember, we spent such jolly winter evenings when your regiment was stationed in our town—and reads

¹ The Army and Navy Gazette.

of *your* heroic deeds with an ardour you cannot imagine. She often speaks of you. "There now," she says, "Mikháylov is a *darling*. I am ready to cover him with kisses when I see him. He [is fighting on the bastions and] is certain to receive a St. George's Cross, and they'll write about him in the papers," &c., &c., so that I am beginning to be quite jealous of you.'

In another place he wrote: "The papers reach us awfully late, and though there are plenty of rumours one cannot believe them all. For instance, those musical young ladies you know of, were saying yesterday that Napoleon has been captured by our Cossacks and sent to St. Petersburg, but you can imagine how much of this I believe. One fresh arrival from Petersburg tells us for certain (he is a capital fellow, sent by the Minister on special business—and now there is no one in the town you can't think what a *resource* he is to us), that we have taken Eupatoria [so that the French are cut off from Balaclava], and that we lost two hundred in the affair and the French as many as fifteen thousand. My wife was in such raptures that she *caroused* all night and said that a presentiment assured her that you distinguished yourself in that affair.'

In spite of the words and expressions I have purposely italicized, and the whole tone of the letter, Lieutenant-Captain Mikháylov thought with an inexpressibly melancholy pleasure about his pale-faced provincial friend and how he used to sit with her of an evening in the arbour, talking *sentiment*. He thought of his kind comrade the U'hlan: how the latter used to get angry and lose when they played cards in the study for kopek points and how his wife used to laugh at him. He recalled the friendship these people had for him (perhaps he thought there was something more on the side of the pale-faced friend): these people and their surroundings flitted through

his memory in a wonderfully sweet, joyously rosy light and, smiling at the recollection, he put his hand to the pocket where this *dear* letter lay.

From these recollections Lieutenant-Captain Mikháýlov involuntarily passed to dreams and hopes. 'How surprised and pleased Natásha will be,' he thought as he passed along a narrow side-street, 'when she reads in the *Invalid* of my being the first to climb on the cannon, and receiving the St. George! I ought to be made full captain on that former recommendation. Then I may easily become a major this year by seniority, because so many of our fellows have been killed and no doubt many more will be killed this campaign. Then there'll be more fighting and I, as a well-known man, shall be entrusted with a regiment . . . then a lieutenant-colonel, the order of St. Anna . . . a colonel' . . . and he was already a general, honouring with a visit Natásha, the widow of his comrade (who would be dead by that time according to his day-dream)—when the sounds of the music on the boulevard reached his ears more distinctly, a crowd of people appeared before his eyes, and he realized that he was on the boulevard and a lieutenant-captain of infantry as before.

III

He went first to the pavilion, beside which stood the band with soldiers of the same regiment acting as music-stands and holding open the music books, while around them clerks, cadets, nursemaids, and children formed a circle, looking on rather than listening. Most of the people who were standing, sitting, and sauntering round the pavilion were naval officers, adjutants, and white-gloved army officers. Along the broad avenue of the boulevard walked officers of all sorts and women of all sorts—a few of the latter in hats, but the greater part with kerchiefs on their heads, and some with neither kerchiefs nor

hats—but it was remarkable that there was not a single old woman amongst them—all were young. Lower down, in the scented alleys shaded by the white acacias, isolated groups sat or strolled.

No one was particularly glad to meet Lieutenant-Captain Mikháylov on the boulevard, except perhaps Captain Obzhógov of his regiment and Captain Súslikov who pressed his hand warmly, but the first of these wore camel-hair trousers, no gloves, and a shabby overcoat, and his face was red and perspiring, and the second shouted so loud and was so free and easy that one felt ashamed to be seen walking with him, especially by those white-gloved officers—to one of whom, an adjutant, Mikháylov bowed, and he might have bowed to another, a Staff officer whom he had twice met at the house of a mutual acquaintance. Besides, what was the fun of walking with Obzhógov and Súslikov when as it was he met them and shook hands with them six times a day? Was this what he had come to hear *the music* for?

He would have liked to accost the adjutant whom he had bowed to and to talk with those gentlemen, not at all that he wanted Captains Obzhógov and Súslikov and Lieutenant Pashtétski and others to see him talking to them, but simply because they were pleasant people who knew all the news and might have told him something.

But why is Lieutenant-Captain Mikháylov afraid and unable to muster courage to approach them? 'Supposing they don't return my greeting,' he thinks, 'or merely bow and go on talking among themselves as if I were not there, or simply walk away and leave me standing among the aristocrats?' The word aristocrats (in the sense of the highest and most select circle of any class) has lately gained great popularity in Russia, where one would think it ought not to exist. It has made its way to every part of the country, and into every grade of society which can be reached by

vanity—and to what conditions of time and circumstance does this pitiful propensity not penetrate? You find it among merchants, officials, clerks, officers—in Sarátov, Mamadíshi, Vinnitza, in fact wherever men are to be found. And since there are many men, and consequently much vanity, in the besieged town of Sevastopol, aristocrats are to be found here too, though death hangs over everyone, be he aristocrat or not.

To Captain Obzhógov, Lieutenant-Captain Mikháylov was an aristocrat, and to Lieutenant-Captain Mikháylov, Adjutant Kalúgin was an aristocrat, because he was an adjutant and intimate with another adjutant. To Adjutant Kalúgin, Count Nórdov was an aristocrat, because he was an aide-de-camp to the Emperor.

Vanity! vanity! vanity! everywhere, even on the brink of the grave and among men ready to die for a noble cause. Vanity! It seems to be the characteristic feature and special malady of our time. How is it that among our predecessors no mention was made of this passion, as of small-pox and cholera? How is it that in our time there are only three kinds of people: those who, considering vanity an inevitably existing fact and therefore justifiable, freely submit to it; those who regard it as a sad but unavoidable condition; and those who act unconsciously and slavishly under its influence? Why did the Homers and Shakespeares speak of love, glory, and suffering, while the literature of to-day is an endless story of snobbery and vanity?

Twice the lieutenant-captain passed irresolutely by the group of his aristocrats, but drawing near them for the third time he made an effort and walked up to them. The group consisted of four officers: Adjutant Kalúgin, Mikháylov's acquaintance, Adjutant Prince Gáltsin who was rather an aristocrat even for Kalúgin himself, Lieutenant-Colonel Neférdov, one of the so-called 'two hundred and twenty-two'

society men, who being on the retired list re-entered the army for this war, and Cavalry-Captain Praskúkhin, also of the 'two hundred and twenty-two'. Luckily for Mikháylov, Kalúgin was in splendid spirits (the General had just spoken to him in a very confidential manner, and Prince Gálstin who had arrived from Petersburg was staying with him), so he did not think it beneath his dignity to shake hands with Mikháylov, which was more than Praskúkhin did though he had often met Mikháylov on the bastion, had more than once drunk his wine and vodka, and even owed him twelve and a half rubles lost at cards. Not being yet well acquainted with Prince Gálstin he did not like to appear to be acquainted with a mere lieutenant-captain of infantry. So he only bowed slightly.

'Well, Captain,' said Kalúgin, 'when will you be visiting the bastion again? Do you remember our meeting at the Schwartz Redoubt? Things were hot, weren't they, eh?'

'Yes, very,' said Mikháylov, and he recalled how when making his way along the trench to the bastion he had met Kalúgin walking bravely along, his sabre clanking smartly.

'My turn's to-morrow by rights, but we have an officer ill', continued Mikháylov, 'so——'

He wanted to say that it was not his turn but as the Commander of the 8th Company was ill and only the ensign was left in the company, he felt it his duty to go in place of Lieutenant Nepshisétski and would therefore be at the bastion that evening. But Kalúgin did not hear him out.

'I feel sure that something is going to happen in a day or two,' he said to Prince Gálstin.

'How about to-day? Will nothing happen to-day?' Mikháylov asked shyly, looking first at Kalúgin and then at Gálstin.

No one replied. Prince Gálstin only puckered up

his face in a curious way and looking over Mikháylov's cap said after a short silence:

'Fine girl that, with the red kerchief. You know her, don't you, Captain?'

'She lives near my lodgings, she's a sailor's daughter,' answered the lieutenant-captain.

'Come, let's have a good look at her.'

And Prince Gáltsin gave one of his arms to Kalúgin and the other to the lieutenant-captain, being sure he would confer great pleasure on the latter by so doing, which was really quite true.

The lieutenant-captain was superstitious and considered it a great sin to amuse himself with women before going into action; but on this occasion he pretended to be a *roué*, which Prince Gáltsin and Kalúgin evidently did not believe and which greatly surprised the girl with the red kerchief, who had more than once noticed how the lieutenant-captain blushed when he passed her window. Praskúkhin walked behind them, and kept touching Prince Gáltsin's arm and making various remarks in French, but as four people could not walk abreast on the path he was obliged to go alone until, on the second round, he took the arm of a well-known brave naval officer, Servyágin, who came up and spoke to him, being also anxious to join the aristocrats. And the well-known hero gladly passed his honest muscular hand under the elbow of Praskúkhin, whom everybody, including Servyágin himself, knew to be no better than he should be. When, wishing to explain his acquaintance with this sailor, Praskúkhin whispered to Prince Gáltsin that this was the well-known hero, Prince Gáltsin—who had been in the Fourth Bastion the day before and seen a shell burst at some twenty yards' distance—considering himself not less courageous than the newcomer, and believing that many reputations are obtained by luck, paid not the slightest attention to Servyágin.

Lieutenant-Captain Mikháylov found it so pleasant to walk in this company that he forgot the nice letter from T—— and his gloomy forebodings at the thought of having to go to the bastion. He remained with them till they began talking exclusively among themselves, avoiding his eyes to show that he might go, and at last walked away from him. But all the same the lieutenant-captain was contented, and when he passed Cadet Baron Pesth—who was particularly conceited and self-satisfied since the previous night, when for the first time in his life he had been in the bomb-proof of the Fifth Bastion and had consequently become a hero in his own estimation—he was not at all hurt by the suspiciously haughty expression with which the cadet saluted him.

IV

But the lieutenant-captain had hardly crossed the threshold of his lodgings before very different thoughts entered his head. He saw his little room with its uneven earth floor, its crooked windows, the broken panes mended with paper, his old bedstead with two Tula pistols and a rug (showing a lady on horseback) nailed to the wall beside it,¹ as well as the dirty bed of the cadet who lived with him, with its cotton quilt. He saw his man Nikíta, with his rough greasy hair, rise from the floor scratching himself, he saw his old cloak, his common boots, a little bundle tied in a handkerchief ready for him to take to the bastion, from which peeped a bit of cheese and the neck of a porter bottle containing vodka—and he suddenly remembered that he had to go with his company to spend the whole night at the lodgements.

‘I shall certainly be killed to-night,’ thought he, ‘I feel I shall. And there was really no need for me to

¹ A common way in Russia of protecting a bed from the damp or cold of a wall, is to nail a rug or carpet to the wall by the side of the bed.

go—I offered to do it of my own accord. And it always happens that the one who offers himself gets killed. And what is the matter with that confounded Nepshisétski? He may not be ill at all, and they'll go and kill me because of him—they're sure to. Still, if they don't kill me I shall certainly be recommended for promotion. I saw how pleased the regimental commander was when I said: "Allow me to go if Lieutenant Nepshisétski is ill." If I'm not made a major then I'll get the Order of Vladimir for certain. Why, I am going to the bastion for the thirteenth time. Oh dear, the thirteenth! Unlucky number! I am certain to be killed. I feel I shall . . . but somebody had to go: the company can't go with only an ensign. Supposing something were to happen. . . . Why, the honour of the regiment, the honour of the army is at stake. It is my *duty* to go. Yes, my sacred duty. . . . But I have a presentiment.'

The lieutenant-captain forgot that it was not the first time he had felt this presentiment: that in a greater or lesser degree he had it whenever he was going to the bastion, and he did not know that before going into action everyone has such forebodings more or less strongly. Having calmed himself by appealing to his sense of duty—which was highly developed and very strong—the lieutenant-captain sat down at the table and began writing a farewell letter to his father. Ten minutes later, having finished his letter, he rose from the table his eyes wet with tears, and repeating mentally all the prayers he knew he began to dress. His rather tipsy and rude servant lazily handed him his new cloak—the old one which the lieutenant-captain usually wore at the bastion not being mended.

'Why isn't my cloak mended? You do nothing but sleep,' said Mikháylov angrily.

'Sleep indeed!' grumbled Nikíta, 'I do nothing but run about like a dog the whole day, and when I get fagged I mayn't even go to sleep!'

'I see you are drunk again.'

'It's not at your expense if I am, so you needn't complain.'

'Hold your tongue, you dolt!' shouted the lieutenant-captain, ready to strike the man.

Already upset, he now quite lost patience and felt hurt by the rudeness of Nikíta, who had lived with him for the last twelve years and whom he was fond of and even spoilt.

'Dolt? Dolt?' repeated the servant. 'And why do you, sir, abuse me and call me a dolt? You know in times like these it isn't right to abuse people.'

Recalling where he was about to go Mikháylov felt ashamed.

'But you know, Nikíta, you would try anyone's patience!' he said mildly. 'That letter to my father on the table you may leave where it is. Don't touch it,' he added reddening.

'Yes, sir,' said Nikíta, becoming sentimental under the influence of the vodka he had drunk, as he said, at his own expense, and blinking with an evident inclination to weep.

But at the porch, when the lieutenant-captain said, 'Good-bye, Nikíta,' Nikíta burst into forced sobs and rushed to kiss his master's hand, saying, 'Good-bye, sir,' in a broken voice. A sailor's widow who was also standing in the porch could not, as a woman, help joining in this tender scene, and began wiping her eyes on her dirty sleeve, saying something about people who, though they were gentlefolk, took such sufferings upon themselves while she, poor woman, was left a widow. And she told the tipsy Nikíta for the hundredth time about her sorrows; how her husband had been killed in the first *bondbarmant*, and how her hut had been shattered (the one she lived in now was not her own) and so on. After his master was gone Nikíta lit his pipe, asked the landlady's little girl to get some vodka, very soon left off crying, and

even had a quarrel with the old woman about a pail he said she had smashed for him.

'But perhaps I shall only be wounded,' reasoned the lieutenant-captain as he drew near the bastion with his company when twilight had already begun to fall. 'But where, and how? Here or here?' he said to himself, mentally passing his chest, his stomach, and his thighs in review. 'Supposing it's here' (he thought of his thighs) 'and goes right round. . . . Or goes here with a piece of a bomb, then it will be all up.'

The lieutenant-captain passed along the trenches and reached the lodgements safely. In perfect darkness he and an officer of Engineers set the men to their work, after which he sat down in a pit under the breastwork. There was little firing; only now and again there was a lightning flash on our side or *his*, and the brilliant fuse of a bomb formed a fiery arc on the dark, star-speckled sky. But all the bombs fell far beyond or far to the right of the lodgement where the lieutenant-captain sat in his pit. He drank some vodka, ate some cheese, smoked a cigarette, said his prayers, and felt inclined to sleep for a while.

V

Prince Gáltsin, Lieutenant-Colonel Nefërdov, and Praskúkhin—whom no one had invited and to whom no one spoke, but who still stuck to them—went to Kalúgin's to tea.

'But you did not finish telling me about Váška Méndel,' said Kalúgin, when he had taken off his cloak and sat in a soft easy chair by the window unbuttoning the collar of his clean starched shirt. 'How did he get married?'

'It was a joke, my boy! . . . *Je vous dis, il y avait un temps, on ne parlait que de ça à Pétersbourg,*'¹ said Prince

¹ 'I tell you, at one time it was only the only thing talked of in Petersburg.'

Gáltsin, laughing as he jumped up from the piano-stool and sat down near Kalúgin on the window-sill,¹ 'a capital joke. I know all about it.'

And he told, amusingly, cleverly, and with animation, a love story which, as it has no interest for us, we will omit.

It was noticeable that not only Prince Gáltsin but each of these gentlemen who established themselves, one on the window-sill, another with his legs in the air, and a third by the piano, seemed quite different people now from what they had been on the boulevard. There was none of the absurd arrogance and haughtiness they had shown towards the infantry officers; here among themselves they were natural, and Kalúgin and Prince Gáltsin in particular showed themselves very pleasant, merry, and good-natured young fellows. Their conversation was about their Petersburg fellow officers and acquaintances.

'What of Máslovski?'

'Which one—the Leib-Uhlan, or the Horse Guard?'

'I know them both. The one in the Horse Guards I knew when he was a boy just out of school. But the eldest—is he a captain yet?'

'Oh yes, long ago.'

'Is he still fussing about with his gipsy?'

'No, he has dropped her. . . .' And so on in the same strain.

Later on Prince Gáltsin went to the piano and gave an excellent rendering of a gipsy song. Praskúkhin, chiming in unasked, put in a second and did it so well that he was invited to continue, and this delighted him.

A servant brought tea, cream, and cracknels on a silver tray.

'Serve the prince,' said Kalúgin.

'Isn't it strange to think that we're in a besieged

¹ The thick walls of Russian houses allow ample space to sit or lounge at the windows.

town,' said Gáltsin, taking his tea to the window, 'and here's a *pianerforty*, tea with cream, and a house such as I should really be glad to have in Petersburg?'

'Well, if we hadn't even that much,' said the old and ever-dissatisfied lieutenant-colonel, 'the constant uncertainty we are living in—seeing people killed day after day and no end to it—would be intolerable. And to have dirt and discomfort added to it——.'

'But our infantry officers live at the bastions with their men in the bomb-proofs and eat the soldiers' soup', said Kalúgin, 'what of them?'

'What of them? Well, though it's true they don't change their shirts for ten days at a time, they are heroes all the same—wonderful fellows.'

Just then an infantry officer entered the room.

'I . . . I have orders . . . may I see the Gen . . . his Excellency? I have come with a message from General N.,' he said with a timid bow.

Kalúgin rose and without returning the officer's greeting asked with an offensive, affected, official smile if he would not have the goodness to wait; and without asking him to sit down or taking any further notice of him he turned to Gáltsin and began talking French, so that the poor officer left alone in the middle of the room did not in the least know what to do with himself.

'It is a matter of the utmost urgency, sir,' he said after a short silence.

'Ah! Well then, please come with me,' said Kalúgin, putting on his cloak and accompanying the officer to the door.

'*Eh bien, messieurs, je crois que cela chauffera cette nuit,*'¹ said Kalúgin when he returned from the General's.

'Ah! What is it—a *sortie*?²' asked the others.

¹ 'Well, gentlemen, I think there will be warm work to-night.'

'That I don't know. You will see for yourselves,' replied Kalúgin with a mysterious smile.

'And my commander is at the bastion, so I suppose I must go too,' said Praskúkhin, buckling on his sabre.

No one replied, it was his business to know whether he had to go or not.

Praskúkhin and Nefërdov left to go to their appointed posts.

'Good-bye gentlemen. *Au revoir!* We'll meet again before the night is over,' shouted Kalúgin from the window as Praskúkhin and Nefërdov, stooping on their Cossack saddles, trotted past. The tramp of their Cossack horses soon died away in the dark street.

'*Non, dites-moi, est-ce qu'il y aura véritablement quelque chose cette nuit?*'¹ said Gáltsin as he lounged in the window-sill beside Kalúgin and watched the bombs that rose above the bastions.

'I can tell *you*, you see . . . you have been to the bastions?' (Gáltsin nodded, though he had only been once to the Fourth Bastion). 'You remember just in front of our lunette there is a trench,'—and Kalúgin, with the air of one who without being a specialist considers his military judgement very sound, began, in a rather confused way and misusing the technical terms, to explain the position of the enemy, and of our own works, and the plan of the intended action.

'But I say, they're banging away at the lodgements! Oho! I wonder if that's ours or *his*? . . . Now it's burst,' said they as they lounged on the window-sill looking at the fiery trails of the bombs crossing one another in the air, at flashes that for a moment lit up the dark sky, at puffs of white smoke, and listened to the more and more rapid reports of the firing.

'*Quel charmant coup d'œil! a?*'² said Kalúgin, drawing his guest's attention to the really beautiful sight. 'Do

¹ 'No, tell me, will there really be anything to-night?'

² 'What a charming sight, eh?'

you know, you sometimes can't distinguish a bomb from a star.'

'Yes, I thought that was a star just now and then saw it fall . . . there! it's burst. And that big star—what do you call it?—looks just like a bomb.'

'Do you know I am so used to these bombs that I am sure when I'm back in Russia I shall fancy I see bombs every starlight night—one gets so used to them.'

'But hadn't I better go with this sortie?' said Prince Gáltsin after a moment's pause.

'Humbug, my dear fellow! Don't think of such a thing. Besides, I won't let you,' answered Kalúgin. 'You will have plenty of opportunities later on.'

'Really? You think I need not go, eh?'

At that moment, from the direction in which these gentlemen were looking, amid the boom of the cannon came the terrible rattle of musketry, and thousands of little fires flaming up in quick succession flashed all along the line.

'There! Now it's the real thing!' said Kalúgin. 'I can't keep cool when I hear the noise of muskets. It seems to seize one's very soul, you know. There's an *hurrah!*' he added, listening intently to the distant and prolonged roar of hundreds of voices—'Ah—ah—ah'—which came from the bastions.

'Whose *hurrah* was it? Theirs or ours?'

'I don't know, but it's hand-to-hand fighting now, for the firing has ceased.'

At that moment an officer followed by a Cossack galloped under the window and alighted from his horse at the porch.

'Where are you from?'

'From the bastion. I want the General.'

'Come along. Well, what's happened?'

'The lodgements have been attacked—and occupied. The French brought up tremendous reserves—attacked us—we had only two battalions,' said the

officer, panting. He was the same officer who had been there that evening, but though he was now out of breath he walked to the door with full self-possession.

'Well, have we retired?' asked Kalúgin.

'No,' angrily replied the officer, 'another battalion came up in time—we drove them back, but the colonel is killed and many officers. I have orders to ask for reinforcements.'

And saying this he went with Kalúgin to the General's, where we shall not follow him.

Five minutes later Kalúgin was already on his Cossack horse (again in the semi-Cossack manner which I have noticed that all adjutants, for some reason, seem to consider the proper thing), and rode off at a trot towards the bastion to deliver some orders and await the final result of the affair. Prince Gáltsin, under the influence of that oppressive excitement usually produced in a spectator by proximity to an action in which he is not engaged, went out, and began aimlessly pacing up and down the street.

VI

Soldiers passed carrying the wounded on stretchers or supporting them under their arms. It was quite dark in the streets, lights could be seen here and there, but only in the hospital windows or where some officers were sitting up. From the bastions still came the thunder of cannon and the rattle of muskets,¹ and flashes kept on lighting up the dark sky as before. From time to time the tramp of hoofs could be heard as an orderly galloped past, or the groans of a

¹ Rifles, except some clumsy *stutzers*, had not been introduced into the Russian army, but were used by the besiegers, who had a still greater advantage in artillery. It is characteristic of Tolstóy that, occupied with men rather than mechanics, he does not in these sketches dwell on this disparity of equipment.

wounded man, the steps and voices of stretcher-bearers, or the words of some frightened women who had come out onto their porches to watch the cannonade.

Among the spectators were our friend Nikíta, the old sailor's widow with whom he had again made friends, and her ten-year-old daughter.

'O Lord God! Holy Mary, Mother of God!' said the old woman, sighing as she looked at the bombs that kept flying across from side to side like balls of fire; 'What horrors! What horrors! Ah, ah! Oh, oh! Even at the first *bombardment* it wasn't like that. Look now where the cursed thing has burst just over our house in the suburb.'

'No, that's further, they keep tumbling into Aunt Irene's garden,' said the girl.

'And where, where, is master now?' drawled Nikíta, who was not quite sober yet. 'Oh! You don't know how I love that master of mine! I love him so that if he were killed in a sinful way, which God forbid, then would you believe it, granny, after that I myself don't know what I wouldn't do to myself! I don't! . . . My master is that sort, there's only one word for it. Would I change him for such as them there, playing cards? What are they? Ugh! There's only one word for it!' concluded Nikíta, pointing to the lighted window of his master's room to which, in the absence of the lieutenant-captain, Cadet Zhvadchévski had invited Sub-Lieutenants Ugróvich and Nepshisétski—the latter suffering from face-ache—and where he was having a spree in honour of a medal he had received.

'Look at the stars! Look how they're rolling!' the little girl broke the silence that followed Nikíta's words as she stood gazing at the sky. 'There's another rolled down. What is it a sign of, mother?'

'They'll smash up our hut altogether,' said the old woman with a sigh, leaving her daughter unanswering.

'As we went there to-day with uncle, mother,' the little girl continued in a sing-song tone, becoming loquacious, 'there was such a b—i—g cannon-ball inside the room close to the cupboard. Must have smashed in through the passage and right into the room! Such a big one—you couldn't lift it.'

'Those who had husbands and money all moved away,' said the old woman, 'and there's the hut, all that was left me, and that's been smashed. Just look at *him* blazing away! The fiend! . . . O Lord! O Lord!'

'And just as we were going out, comes a bomb fly-ing, and goes and bur-sts and co-o-vers us with dust. A bit of it nearly hit me and uncle.'

VII

Prince Gáltsin met more and more wounded carried on stretchers or walking supported by others who were talking loudly.

'Up they sprang, friends,' said the bass voice of a tall soldier with two guns slung from his shoulder, 'up they sprang, shouting "Allah! Allah!"¹ and just climbing one over another. You kill one and another's there, you couldn't do anything; no end of 'em——'

But at this point in the story Gáltsin interrupted him.

'You are from the bastion?'

'Yes, your Honour.'

'Well, what happened? Tell me.'

'What happened? Well, your Honour, such a force of 'em poured down on us over the rampart, it was all up. They quite overpowered us, your Honour!'

'Overpowered? . . . But you repulsed them?'

'How could we repulse them when *his* whole force came on, killed all our men, and no re'forcements were given us?'

¹ Our soldiers fighting the Turks have become so accustomed to this cry of the enemy that they now always say that the French also shout 'Allah!' L. T.

The soldier was mistaken, the trench had remained ours; but it is a curious fact which anyone may notice, that a soldier wounded in action always thinks the affair lost and imagines it to have been a very bloody fight.

'How is that? I was told they had been repulsed,' said Gáltsin irritably. 'Perhaps they were driven back after you left? Is it long since you came away?'

'I am straight from there, your Honour,' answered the soldier, 'it is hardly possible. They must have kept the trench, *he* quite overpowered us.'

'And aren't you ashamed to have lost the trench? It's terrible!' said Gáltsin, provoked by such indifference.

'Why, if the strength is on their side . . .' muttered the soldier.

'Ah, your Honour,' began a soldier from a stretcher which had just come up to them, 'how could we help giving it up when *he* had killed almost all our men? If we'd had the strength we wouldn't have given it up, not on any account. But as it was, what could we do? I stuck one, and then something hits me. Oh, oh-h! Steady, lads, steady! Oh, oh!' groaned the wounded man.

'Really, there seem to be too many men returning,' said Gáltsin, again stopping the tall soldier with the two guns. 'Why are you retiring? You there, stop!'

The soldier stopped and took off his cap with his left hand.

'Where are you going, and why?' shouted Gáltsin severely, 'you scoun——'

But having come close up to the soldier, Gáltsin noticed that no hand was visible beneath the soldier's right cuff and that the sleeve was soaked in blood to the elbow.

'I am wounded, your Honour.'

'Wounded? How?'

'Here. Must have been with a bullet,' said the man,

pointing to his arm, 'but I don't know what struck my head here,' and bending his head he showed the matted hair at the back stuck together with blood.

'And whose is this other gun?'

'It's a French rifle I took, your Honour. But I wouldn't have come away if it weren't to lead this fellow—he may fall,' he added, pointing to a soldier who was walking a little in front leaning on his gun and painfully dragging his left leg.

Prince Gáltsin suddenly felt horribly ashamed of his unjust suspicions. He felt himself blushing, turned away, and went to the hospital without either questioning or watching the wounded men any more.

Having with difficulty pushed his way through the porch among the wounded who had come on foot and the bearers who were carrying in the wounded and bringing out the dead, Gáltsin entered the first room, gave a look round, and involuntarily turned back and ran out into the street: it was too terrible.

VIII

The large, lofty, dark hall, lit up only by the four or five candles with which the doctors examined the wounded, was quite full. Yet the bearers kept bringing in more wounded—laying them side by side on the floor which was already so packed that the unfortunate patients were jostled together, staining one another with their blood—and going to fetch more wounded. The pools of blood visible in the unoccupied spaces, the feverish breathing of several hundred men, and the perspiration of the bearers with the stretchers, filled the air with a peculiar, heavy, thick, fetid mist, in which the candles burnt dimly in different parts of the hall. All sorts of groans, sighs, death-rattles, now and then interrupted by shrill screams, filled the whole room. Sisters with quiet faces, expressing no empty feminine tearful pity, but active practical sympathy, stepped here and there

across the wounded with medicines, water, bandages, and lint, flitting among the blood-stained coats and shirts. The doctors, kneeling with rolled-up sleeves beside the wounded, by the light of the candles their assistants held, examined, felt, and probed their wounds, heedless of the terrible groans and entreaties of the sufferers. One doctor sat at a table near the door and at the moment Gáltsin came in was already entering No. 532.

'Iván Bogáev, Private, Company Three, S—Regiment, *fractura femuris complicata!*' shouted another doctor from the end of the room, examining a shattered leg. 'Turn him over.'

'Oh, oh, fathers! Oh, you're our fathers!' screamed the soldier, beseeching them not to touch him.

'Perforatio capitis!'

'Simon Nefërdov, Lieutenant-Colonel of the N—Infantry Regiment. Have a little patience, Colonel, or it is quite impossible: I shall give it up!' said a third doctor, poking about with some kind of hook in the unfortunate colonel's skull.

'Oh, don't! Oh, for God's sake be quick! Be quick! Ah——!'

Perforatio pectoris . . . Sebastian Seredá, Private . . . what regiment? But you need not write that: *moritur*. Carry him away,' said the doctor, leaving the soldier, whose eyes turned up and in whose throat the death-rattle already sounded.

About forty soldier stretcher-bearers stood at the door waiting to carry the bandaged to the wards and the dead to the chapel. They looked on at the scene before them in silence, only broken now and then by a heavy sigh.

IX

On his way to the bastion Kalúgin met many wounded, but knowing by experience that in action such sights have a bad effect on one's spirits, he did

not stop to question them but tried on the contrary not to notice them. At the foot of the hill he met an orderly-officer galloping fast from the bastion.

‘Zóbkin! Zóbkin! Wait a bit!’

‘Well, what is it?’

‘Where are you from?’

‘The lodgements.’

‘How are things there—hot?’

‘Oh, awful!’

And the orderly galloped on.

In fact, though there was now but little small-arm firing, the cannonade had recommenced with fresh heat and persistence.

‘Ah, that’s bad!’ thought Kalúgin with an unpleasant sensation, and he too had a presentiment—a very usual thought, the thought of death. But Kalúgin was ambitious and blessed with nerves of oak—in a word, he was what is called brave. He did not yield to the first feeling but began to nerve himself. He recalled how an adjutant, Napoleon’s he thought, having delivered an order, galloped with bleeding head full speed to Napoleon. ‘*Vous êtes blessé.*’¹ said Napoleon. ‘*Je vous demande pardon, sire, je suis mort,*’² and the adjutant fell from his horse, dead.

That seemed to him very fine, and he pictured himself for a moment in the role of that adjutant. Then he whipped his horse, assuming a still more dashing Cossack seat, looked back at the Cossack who, standing up in his stirrups, was trotting behind, and rode quite gallantly up to the spot where he had to dismount. Here he found four soldiers sitting on some stones smoking their pipes.

‘What are you doing there?’ he shouted at them.

‘Been carrying off a wounded man and sat down to rest a bit, your Honour,’ said one of them, hiding his pipe behind his back and taking off his cap.

¹ ‘You are wounded?’

² ‘Excuse me, sire, I am dead.’

'Resting, indeed! . . . To your places, march!'

And he went up the hill with them through the trench, meeting wounded men at every step.

After ascending the hill he turned to the left, and a few steps farther on found himself quite alone. A splinter of a bomb whizzed near him and fell into the trench. Another bomb rose in front of him and seemed flying straight at him. He suddenly felt frightened, ran a few steps at full speed, and lay down flat. When the bomb burst a considerable distance off he felt exceedingly vexed with himself and rose, looking round to see if anyone had noticed his downfall, but no one was near.

But when fear has once entered the soul it does not easily yield to any other feeling. He, who always boasted that he never even stooped, now hurried along the trench almost on all fours. He stumbled, and thought, 'Oh, it's awful! They'll kill me for certain!' His breath came with difficulty, and perspiration broke out over his whole body. He was surprised at himself but no longer strove to master his feelings.

Suddenly he heard footsteps in front. Quickly straightening himself he raised his head, and boldly clanking his sabre went on more deliberately. He felt himself quite a different man. When he met an officer of the Engineers and a sailor, and the officer shouted to him to lie down, pointing to a bright spot which growing brighter and brighter approached more and more swiftly and came crashing down close to the trench, he only bent a little, involuntarily influenced by the frightened cry, and went on.

'That's a brave one,' said the sailor, looking quite calmly at the bomb and with experienced eye deciding at once that the splinters could not fly into the trench, 'he won't even lie down.'

It was only a few steps across open ground to the bomb-proof shelter of the Commander of the bastion,

when Kalúgin's mind again became clouded and the same stupid terror seized him: his heart beat more violently, the blood rushed to his head, and he had to make an effort to force himself to run to the bomb-proof.

'Why are you so out of breath?' said the General, when Kalúgin had reported his instructions.

'I walked very fast, your Excellency!'

'Won't you have a glass of wine?'

Kalúgin drank a glass of wine and lit a cigarette. The action was over, only a fierce cannonade still continued from both sides. In the bomb-proof sat General N—, the Commander of the bastion, and some six other officers among whom was Praskúkhin. They were discussing various details of the action. Sitting in this comfortable room with blue wall-paper, a sofa, a bed, a table with papers on it, a wall-clock with a lamp burning before it, and an *icón*¹—looking at these signs of habitation, at the beams more than two feet thick that formed the ceiling, and listening to the shots that sounded faint here in the shelter, Kalúgin could not understand how he had twice allowed himself to be overcome by such unpardonable weakness. He was angry with himself and wished for danger in order to test his nerve once more.

'Ah! I'm glad you are here, Captain,' said he to a naval officer with big moustaches who wore a staff-officer's coat with a St. George's Cross and had just entered the shelter and asked the General to give him some men to repair two embrasures of his battery which had become blocked. When the General had finished speaking to the captain, Kalúgin said: 'The Commander-in-Chief told me to ask if your guns can fire case-shot into the trenches.'

¹ The Russian *icóns* are paintings in Byzantine style of God, the Holy Virgin, Christ, or some saint, martyr, or angel. They are usually on wood and often covered over, except the face and hands, with an embossed gilt cover.

'Only one of them can,' said the captain sullenly.

'All the same, let us go and see.'

The captain frowned and gave an angry grunt.

'I have been standing there all night and have come in to get a bit of rest—couldn't you go alone?' he added. 'My assistant, Lieutenant Kartz, is there and can show you everything.'

The captain had already been more than six months in command of this, one of the most dangerous batteries. From the time the siege began, even before the bomb-proof shelters were constructed, he had lived continuously on the bastion and had a great reputation for courage among the sailors. That is why his refusal struck and surprised Kalúgin. 'So much for reputation,' thought he.

'Well then, I will go alone if I may,' he said in a slightly sarcastic tone to the captain, who however paid no attention to his words.

Kalúgin did not realize that whereas he had spent some fifty hours all in all at different times on the bastions, the captain had lived there for six months. Kalúgin was still actuated by vanity, the wish to shine, the hope of rewards, of gaining a reputation, and the charm of running risks. But the captain had already lived through all that: at first he had felt vain, had shown off his courage, had been foolhardy, had hoped for rewards and reputation and had even gained them, but now all these incentives had lost their power over him and he saw things differently. He fulfilled his duty exactly, but quite understanding how much the chances of life were against him after six months at the bastion, he no longer ran risks without serious need, and so the young lieutenant who had joined the battery a week ago and was now showing it to Kalúgin, with whom he vied in uselessly leaning out of the embrasures and climbing out on the banquette, seemed ten times braver than the captain.

Returning to the shelter after examining the battery, Kalúgin in the dark came upon the General, who accompanied by his staff officers was going to the watch-tower.

‘Captain Praskúkhin,’ he heard the General say, ‘please go to the right lodgement and tell the second battalion of the M— Regiment which is at work there to cease their work, leave the place, and noiselessly rejoin their regiment which is stationed in reserve at the foot of the hill. Do you understand? Lead them yourself to the regiment.’

‘Yes, sir.’

And Praskúkhin started at full speed towards the lodgements.

The firing was now becoming less frequent.

X

‘Is this the second battalion of the M— Regiment?’ asked Praskúkhin, having run to his destination and coming across some soldiers carrying earth in sacks.

‘It is, your Honour.’

‘Where is the Commander?’

Mikháylov, thinking that the commander of the company was being asked for, got out of his pit and taking Praskúkhin for a commanding officer saluted and approached him.

‘The General’s orders are . . . that you . . . should go . . . quickly . . . and above all quietly . . . back—no not back, but to the reserves,’ said Praskúkhin, looking askance in the direction of the enemy’s fire.

Having recognized Praskúkhin and made out what was wanted, Mikháylov dropped his hand and passed on the order. The battalion became alert, the men took up their muskets, put on their cloaks, and set out.

No one without experiencing it can imagine the delight a man feels when, after three hours’ bombardment, he leaves so dangerous a spot as the lodgements. During those three hours Mikháylov, who

more than once and not without reason had thought his end at hand, had had time to accustom himself to the conviction that he would certainly be killed and that he no longer belonged to this world. But in spite of that he had great difficulty in keeping his legs from running away with him when, leading the company with Praskúkhin at his side, he left the lodgement.

'*Au revoir!*' said a major with whom Mikháylov had eaten bread and cheese sitting in the pit under the breastwork and who was remaining at the bastion in command of another battalion. 'I wish you a lucky journey.'

'And I wish you a lucky defence. It seems to be getting quieter now.'

But scarcely had he uttered these words before the enemy, probably observing the movement in the lodgement, began to fire more and more frequently. Our guns replied and a heavy firing recommenced.

The stars were high in the sky but shone feebly. The night was pitch dark, only the flashes of the guns and the bursting bombs made things around suddenly visible. The soldiers walked quickly and silently, involuntarily outpacing one another; only their measured footfall on the dry road was heard besides the incessant roll of the guns, the ringing of bayonets when they touched one another, a sigh, or the prayer of some poor soldier lad: 'Lord, O Lord! What does it mean?' Now and again the moaning of a man who was hit could be heard, and the cry, 'Stretchers!' (In the company Mikháylov commanded artillery fire alone carried off twenty-six men that night.) A flash on the dark and distant horizon, the cry, 'Can-n-on!' from the sentinel on the bastion, and a ball flew buzzing above the company and plunged into the earth, making the stones fly.

'What the devil are they so slow for?' thought Praskúkhin, continually looking back as he marched beside Mikháylov. 'I'd really better run on. I've

delivered the order. . . . But no, they might afterwards say I'm a coward. What must be will be. I'll keep beside him.'

'Now why is he walking with me?' thought Mikháylov on his part. 'I have noticed over and over again that he always brings ill luck. Here it comes, I believe, straight for us.'

After they had gone a few hundred paces they met Kalúgin, who was walking briskly towards the lodgements clanking his sabre. He had been ordered by the General to find out how the works were progressing there. But when he met Mikháylov he thought that instead of going there himself under such a terrible fire—which he was not ordered to do—he might just as well find out all about it from an officer who had been there. And having heard from Mikháylov full details of the work and walked a little way with him, Kalúgin turned off into a trench leading to the bomb-proof shelter.

'Well, what news?' asked an officer who was eating his supper there all alone.

'Nothing much. It seems that the affair is over.'

'Over? How so? On the contrary, the General has just gone again to the watch-tower and another regiment has arrived. Yes, there it is. Listen! The muskets again! Don't you go—why should you?' added the officer, noticing that Kalúgin made a movement.

'I certainly ought to be there,' thought Kalúgin, 'but I have already exposed myself a great deal to-day: the firing is awful!'

'Yes, I think I'd better wait here for him,' he said.

And really about twenty minutes later the General and the officers who were with him returned. Among them was Cadet Baron Pesth but not Praskúkhin. The lodgements had been retaken and occupied by us.

After receiving a full account of the affair Kalúgin, accompanied by Pesth, left the bomb-proof shelter.

XI

‘There’s blood on your coat! You don’t mean to say you were in the hand-to-hand fight?’ asked Kalúgin.

‘Oh, it was awful! Just fancy——’

And Pesth began to relate how he had led his company, how the company-commander had been killed, how he himself had stabbed a Frenchman, and how if it had not been for him we should have lost the day.

This tale was founded on fact: the company-commander had been killed and Pesth had bayoneted a Frenchman, but in recounting the details the cadet invented and bragged.

He bragged unintentionally, because during the whole of the affair he had been as it were in a fog and so bewildered that all he remembered of what had happened seemed to have happened somewhere, at some time, and to somebody. And very naturally he tried to recall the details in a light advantageous to himself. What really occurred was this:

The battalion the cadet had been ordered to join for the sortie stood under fire for two hours close to some low wall. Then the battalion-commander in front said something, the company-commanders became active, the battalion advanced from behind the breastwork, and after going about a hundred paces stopped to form into company columns. Pesth was told to take his place on the right flank of the second company.

Quite unable to realize where he was and why he was there, the cadet took his place, and involuntarily holding his breath while cold shivers ran down his back he gazed into the dark distance expecting something dreadful. He was however not so much frightened (for there was no firing) as disturbed and agitated at being in the field beyond the fortifications.

Again the battalion-commander in front said some-

thing. Again the officers spoke in whispers passing on the order, and the black wall, formed by the first company, suddenly sank out of sight. The order was to lie down. The second company also lay down and in lying down Pesth hurt his hand on a sharp prickle. Only the commander of the second company remained standing. His short figure brandishing a sword moved in front of the company and he spoke incessantly.

‘Mind lads! Show them what you’re made of! Don’t fire, but give it them with the bayonet—the dogs!—when I cry “Hurrah!” Altogether, mind, that’s the thing! We’ll let them see who we are. We won’t disgrace ourselves, eh lads? For our father the Tsar!’

‘What’s your company-commander’s name?’ asked Pesth of a cadet lying near him. ‘How brave he is!’

‘Yes he always is, in action,’ answered the cadet. ‘His name is Lisinkóvski.’

Just then a flame suddenly flashed up right in front of the company, who were deafened by a resounding crash. High up in the air stones and splinters clattered. (Some fifty seconds later a stone fell from above and severed a soldier’s leg.) It was a bomb fired from an elevated stand, and the fact that it reached the company showed that the French had noticed the column.

‘You’re sending bombs, are you? Wait a bit till we get at you, then you’ll taste a three-edged Russian bayonet, damn you!’ said the company-commander so loud that the battalion-commander had to order him to hold his tongue and not make so much noise.

After that the first company got up, then the second. They were ordered to fix bayonets and the battalion advanced. Pesth was in such a fright that he could not in the least make out how long it lasted, where he went, or who was who. He went on as if he were drunk. But suddenly a million fires flashed from all sides, and something whistled and clattered. He

shouted and ran somewhere, because everyone shouted and ran. Then he stumbled and fell over something. It was the company-commander, who had been wounded at the head of his company, and who taking the cadet for a Frenchman had seized him by the leg. Then when Pesth had freed his leg and got up, someone else ran against him from behind in the dark and nearly knocked him down again. 'Run him through!' someone else shouted. 'Why are you stopping?' Then someone seized a bayonet and stuck it into something soft. '*Ah Dieu!*' came a dreadful, piercing voice and Pesth only then understood that he had bayoneted a Frenchman. A cold sweat covered his whole body, he trembled as in a fever and threw down his musket. But this lasted only a moment; the thought immediately entered his head that he was a hero. He again seized his musket, and shouting 'Hurrah!' ran with the crowd away from the dead Frenchman. Having run twenty paces he came to a trench. Some of our men were there with the battalion-commander.'

'And I have killed one!' said Pesth to the commander.

'You're a fine fellow, Baron!'

XII

'Do you know Praskúkhin is killed?' said Pesth, while accompanying Kalúgin on his way home.

'Impossible!'

'It is true. I saw him myself.'

'Well, good-bye . . . I must be off.'

'This is capital!' thought Kalúgin, as he came to his lodgings. 'It's the first time I have had such luck when on duty. It's first-rate. I am alive and well, and shall certainly get an excellent recommendation and am sure of a gold sabre. And I really have deserved it.'

After reporting what was necessary to the General he went to his room, where Prince Gáltsin, long since returned, sat awaiting him, reading a book he had found on Kalúgin's table.

It was with extraordinary pleasure that Kalúgin found himself safe at home again, and having put on his night-shirt and got into bed he gave Gáltsin all the details of the affair, telling them very naturally from a point of view where those details showed what a capable and brave officer he, Kalúgin, was (which it seems to me it was hardly necessary to allude to, since everybody knew it and had no right or reason to question it, except perhaps the deceased Captain Praskúkhin who, though he had considered it an honour to walk arm in arm with Kalúgin, had privately told a friend only yesterday that though Kalúgin was a first-rate fellow, yet, 'between you and me, he was awfully disinclined to go to the bastions').

Praskúkhin, who had been walking beside Mikháylov after Kalúgin had slipped away from him, had scarcely begun to revive a little on approaching a safer place, than he suddenly saw a bright light flash up behind him and heard the sentinel shout 'Mortar!' and a soldier walking behind him say: 'That's coming straight for the bastion!'

Mikháylov looked round. The bright spot seemed to have stopped at its zenith, in the position which makes it absolutely impossible to define its direction. But that only lasted a moment: the bomb, coming faster and faster, nearer and nearer, so that the sparks of its fuse were already visible and its fatal whistle audible, descended towards the centre of the battalion.

'Lie down!' shouted someone.

Mikháylov and Praskúkhin lay flat on the ground. Praskúkhin, closing his eyes, only heard the bomb crash down on the hard earth close by. A second passed which seemed an hour: the bomb had not

exploded. Praskúkhin was afraid. Perhaps he had played the coward for nothing. Perhaps the bomb had fallen far away and it only seemed to him that its fuse was fizzing close by. He opened his eyes and was pleased to see Mikháylov lying immovable at his feet. But at that moment he caught sight of the glowing fuse of the bomb which was spinning on the ground not a yard off. Terror, cold terror excluding every other thought and feeling, seized his whole being. He covered his face with his hands.

Another second passed—a second during which a whole world of feelings, thoughts, hopes, and memories flashed before his imagination.

‘Whom will it hit—Mikháylov or me? Or both of us? And if it’s me, where? In the head? Then I’m done for. But if it’s the leg, they’ll cut it off (I’ll certainly ask for chloroform) and I may survive. But perhaps only Mikháylov will be hit. Then I will tell how we were going side by side and how he was killed and I was splashed with his blood. No, it’s nearer to me . . . it will be I.’

Then he remembered the twelve rubles he owed Mikháylov, remembered also a debt in Petersburg that should have been paid long ago, and the gipsy song he had sung that evening. The woman he loved rose in his imagination wearing a cap with lilac ribbons. He remembered a man who had insulted him five years ago and whom he had not yet paid out. And yet, inseparable from all these and thousands of other recollections, the present thought, the expectation of death, did not leave him for an instant. ‘Perhaps it won’t explode,’ and with desperate decision he resolved to open his eyes. But at that instant a red flame pierced through the still closed lids and something struck him in the middle of his chest with a terrible crash. He jumped up and began to run, but stumbling over the sabre that got between his legs he fell on his side.

'Thank God, I'm only bruised!' was his first thought, and he was about to touch his chest with his hand, but his arms seemed tied to his sides and he felt as if a vice were squeezing his head. Soldiers flitted past him and he counted them unconsciously: 'One, two, three soldiers! And there's an officer with his cloak tucked up,' he thought. Then lightning flashed before his eyes and he wondered whether the shot was fired from a mortar or a cannon. 'A cannon, probably. And there's another shot and here are more soldiers—five, six, seven soldiers. . . . They all pass by!' He was suddenly seized with fear that they would crush him. He wished to shout that he was hurt, but his mouth was so dry that his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth and a terrible thirst tormented him. He felt a wetness about his chest and this sensation of being wet made him think of water, and he longed to drink even this that made him feel wet. 'I suppose I hit myself in falling and made myself bleed,' thought he, and giving way more and more to fear lest the soldiers who kept flitting past might trample on him, he gathered all his strength and tried to shout, 'Take me with you!' but instead of that he uttered such a terrible groan that the sound frightened him. Then some other red fires began dancing before his eyes and it seemed to him that the soldiers put stones on him. The fires danced less and less but the stones they put on him pressed more and more heavily. He made an effort to push off the stones, stretched himself, and saw and heard and felt nothing more. He had been killed on the spot by a bomb-splinter in the middle of his chest.

XIII

When Mikháylov dropped to the ground on seeing the bomb he too, like Praskúkhin, lived through an infinitude of thoughts and feelings in the two seconds that elapsed before the bomb burst. He prayed

mentally and repeated, 'Thy will be done.' And at the same time he thought, 'Why did I enter the army? And why did I join the infantry to take part in this campaign? Wouldn't it have been better to have remained with the Uhlan regiment at T— and spent my time with my friend Natáša? And now here I am . . . ' and he began to count, 'One, two, three, four,' deciding that if the bomb burst at an even number he would live but if at an odd number he would be killed. 'It is all over, I'm killed!' he thought when the bomb burst (he did not remember whether at an odd or even number) and he felt a blow and a cruel pain in his head. 'Lord, forgive me my trespasses!' he muttered, folding his hands. He rose, but fell on his back senseless.

When he came to, his first sensations were that of blood trickling down his nose, and the pain in his head which had become much less violent. 'That's the soul passing,' he thought. 'How will it be *there*? Lord, receive my soul in peace! . . . Only it's strange,' thought he, 'that while dying I should hear the steps of the soldiers and the sounds of the firing so distinctly.'

'Bring stretchers! Eh, the Captain has been hit!' shouted a voice above his head, which he recognized as the voice of the drummer Ignátyev.

Someone took him by the shoulders. With an effort he opened his eyes and saw above him the sky, some groups of stars, and two bombs racing one another as they flew over him. He saw Ignátyev, soldiers with stretchers and guns, the embankment, the trenches, and suddenly realized that he was not yet in the other world.

He had been slightly wounded in the head by a stone. His first feeling was one almost of regret: he had prepared himself so well and so calmly to go *there* that the return to reality, with its bombs, stretchers, and blood, seemed unpleasant. The second feeling was unconscious joy at being alive, and the

third a wish to get away from the bastion as quickly as possible. The drummer tied a handkerchief round his commander's head and taking his arm led him towards the ambulance station.

'But why and where am I going?' thought the lieutenant-captain when he had collected his senses. 'My duty is to remain with the company and not leave it behind—especially,' whispered a voice, 'as it will soon be out of range of the guns.'

'Don't trouble about me, my lad,' said he, drawing his hand away from the attentive drummer. 'I won't go to the ambulance station: I'll stay with the company.'

And he turned back.

'It would be better to have it properly bandaged, your honour,' said Ignátyev. 'It's only in the heat of the moment that it seems nothing. Mind it doesn't get worse. . . . And just see what warm work it is here. . . . Really, your honour——'

Mikháylov stood for a moment undecided, and would probably have followed Ignátyev's advice had he not reflected how many severely wounded there must be at the ambulance station. 'Perhaps the doctors will smile at my scratch,' thought the lieutenant-captain, and in spite of the drummer's arguments he returned to his company.

'And where is the orderly officer Praskúkhin, who was with me?' he asked when he met the ensign who was leading the company.

'I don't know. Killed, I think,' replied the ensign unwillingly.

'Killed? Or only wounded? How is it you don't know? Wasn't he going with us? And why didn't you bring him away?'

'How could we, under such a fire?'

'But how could you do such a thing, Michael Iványch?' said Mikháylov angrily. 'How could you leave him supposing he is alive? Even if he's dead his body ought to have been brought away.'

'Alive indeed, when I tell you I went up and saw him myself!' said the ensign. 'Excuse me. . . . It's hard enough to collect our own. There, those villains are at it again!' he added. 'They're sending up cannon-balls now.'

Mikháylov sat down and lifted his hands to his head, which ached terribly when he moved.

'No, it is absolutely necessary to go back and fetch him,' he said. 'He may still be alive. It is our *duty*, Michael Iványch.'

Michael Iványch did not answer.

'O Lord! Just because he didn't bring him in at the time, soldiers will have to be sent back alone now . . . and yet can I possibly send them under this terrible fire? They may be killed for nothing,' thought Mikháylov.

'Lads! Someone will have to go back to fetch the officer who was wounded out there in the ditch,' said he, not very loudly or peremptorily, for he felt how unpleasant it would be for the soldiers to execute this order. And he was right. Since he had not named any one in particular no one came forward to obey the order.

'And after all he may be dead already. It isn't worth exposing men uselessly to such danger. It's all my fault, I ought to have seen to it. I'll go back myself and find out whether he is alive. It is my *duty*,' said Mikháylov to himself.

'Michael Iványch, you lead the company, I'll catch you up,' said he, and holding up his cloak with one hand while with the other he kept touching a small icon of St. Metrophanes that hung round his neck and in which he had great faith, he ran quickly along the trench.

Having convinced himself that Praskúkhin was dead he dragged himself back panting, holding the bandage that had slipped on his head, which was beginning to ache very badly. When he overtook the

battalion it was already at the foot of the hill and almost beyond the range of the shots. I say 'almost', for a stray bomb reached even here now and then.

'To-morrow I had better go and be entered at the ambulance station,' thought the lieutenant-captain, while a medical assistant, who had turned up, was bandaging his head.

XIV

Hundreds of bodies, which a couple of hours before had been men full of various lofty or trivial hopes and wishes, were lying with fresh bloodstains on their stiffened limbs in the dewy, flowery valley which separated the bastions from the trenches and on the smooth floor of the mortuary chapel in Sevastopol. Hundreds of men with curses or prayers on their parched lips, crawled, writhed, and groaned, some among the dead in the flowery valley, some on stretchers, or beds, or on the blood-stained floor of the ambulance station. Yet the dawn broke behind the Sapún hill, the twinkling stars grew pale and the white mists spread from the dark roaring sea just as on other days, and the rosy morning glow lit up the east, long streaks of red clouds spread along the pale-blue horizon, and just as in the old days the sun rose in power and glory, promising joy, love, and happiness to all the awakening world.

XV

Next evening the Chasseurs' band was again playing on the boulevard, and officers, cadets, soldiers, and young women, again promenaded round the pavilion and along the side-walks under the acacias with their sweet-scented white blossoms.

Kalúgin was walking arm in arm with Prince Gáltsin and a colonel near the pavilion and talking of last night's affair. The main theme of their conversation, as usual in such cases, was not the affair

itself, but the part each of the speakers had taken in it. Their faces and the tone of their voices were serious, almost sorrowful, as if the losses of the night had touched and saddened them all. But to tell the truth, as none of them had lost any one very dear to him, this sorrowful expression was only an official one they considered it their duty to exhibit.

Kalúgin and the colonel in fact, though they were first-rate fellows, were ready to see such an affair every day if they could gain a gold sword and be made major-general each time. It is all very well to call some conqueror a monster because he destroys millions to gratify his ambition, but go and ask any Ensign Petrúshev or Sub-Lieutenant Antónov on their conscience, and you will find that everyone of us is a little Napoleon, a petty monster ready to start a battle and kill a hundred men merely to get an extra medal or one-third additional pay.

'No, I beg your pardon,' said the colonel. 'It began first on the left side. I was there myself.'

'Well, perhaps,' said Kalúgin. 'I spent more time on the right. I went there twice: first to look for the General, and then just to see the lodgements. It was hot there, I can tell you!'

'Kalúgin ought to know,' said Gáltsin. 'By the way, V— told *me* to-day that you are a trump——'

'But the losses, the losses are terrible!' said the colonel. 'In my regiment we had four hundred casualties. It is astonishing that I'm still alive.'

Just then the figure of Mikháylov, with his head bandaged, appeared at the end of the boulevard walking towards these gentlemen.

'What, are you wounded, Captain?' said Kalúgin.

'Yes, slightly, with a stone,' answered Mikháylov.

'*Est-ce que le pavillon est baissé déjà?*'¹ asked Prince Gáltsin, glancing at the lieutenant-captain's cap and not addressing anyone in particular.

¹ 'Is the flag (of truce) lowered already?'

'*Non, pas encore,*'¹ answered Mikháylov, wishing to show that he understood and spoke French.

'Do you mean to say the truce still continues?' said Gáltsin, politely addressing him in Russian and thereby (so it seemed to the lieutenant-captain) suggesting: 'It must no doubt be difficult for you to have to speak French, so hadn't we better simply . . .' and with that the adjutants went away. The lieutenant-captain again felt exceedingly lonely, just as he had done the day before. After bowing to various people—some of whom he did not wish and some of whom he did not venture to join—he sat down near the Kazárski monument and smoked a cigarette.

Baron Pesth also turned up on the boulevard. He mentioned that he had been at the parley and had spoken to the French officers. According to his account one of them had said to him: '*S'il n'avait pas fait clair encore pendant une demi-heure, les ambuscades auraient été reprises,*'² and he replied, '*Monsieur, je ne dis pas non, pour ne pas vous donner un démenti,*'³ and he told how pat it had come out, and so on.

But though he had been at the parley he had not really managed to say anything in particular, though he much wished to speak with the French ('for it's awfully jolly to speak to those fellows'). He had paced up and down the line for a long time asking the Frenchmen near him: '*De quel régiment êtes-vous?*'⁴ and had got his answer and nothing more. When he went too far beyond the line, the French sentry, not suspecting that 'that soldier' knew French, abused him in the third person singular: '*Il vient regarder nos travaux, ce sacré —*'⁵ in consequence of which Cadet

¹ 'No, not yet.'

² 'Had it remained dark for another half-hour, the ambuscades would have been recaptured.'

³ 'Sir, I will not say no, lest I give you the lie.'

⁴ 'What regiment do you belong to?'

⁵ 'He's come to look at our works, the confounded —'

Baron Pesth, finding nothing more to interest him at the parley, rode home, and on his way back composed the French phrases he now repeated.

On the boulevard was Captain Zóbov talking very loud, and Captain Obzhógov, the artillery captain who never curried favour with anyone, was there too, in a dishevelled condition, and also the cadet who was always fortunate in his love affairs, and all the same people as yesterday, with the same motives as always. Only Praskúkhin, Neférdov, and a few more were missing, and hardly anyone now remembered or thought of them, though there had not yet been time for their bodies to be washed, laid out, and put into the ground.

XVI

White flags are hung out on our bastions and on the French trenches, and in the flowery valley between them lie heaps of mangled corpses without boots, some clad in blue and others in grey, which workmen are removing and piling onto carts. The air is filled with the smell of decaying flesh. Crowds of people have poured out from Sevastopol and from the French camp to see the sight, and with eager and friendly curiosity draw near to one another.

Listen to what these people are saying.

Here, in a circle of Russians and Frenchmen who have collected round him, a young officer, who speaks French badly but sufficiently to be understood, is examining a guardsman's pouch.

*'Eh sussy, poor quah se waso lié?'*¹

*'Parce que c'est une giberne d'un régiment de la garde, monsieur, qui porte l'aigle impérial.'*²

*'Eh voo de la guard?'*³

¹ 'And what is this tied bird for?'

² 'Because this is a cartridge pouch of a guard regiment, monsieur, and bears the Imperial eagle.'

³ 'And do you belong to the Guards?'

'Pardon, monsieur, du 6^{ème} de ligne.'¹

'Eh sussy oo ashtay?'² pointing to a cigarette-holder of yellow wood, in which the Frenchman is smoking a cigarette.

'A Balaclava, monsieur. C'est tout simple en bois de palme.'³

'Joli,'⁴ says the officer, guided in his remarks not so much by what he wants to say as by the French words he happens to know.

'Si vous voulez bien garder cela comme souvenir de cette rencontre, vous m'obligerez.'⁵

And the polite Frenchman puts out his cigarette and presents the holder to the officer with a slight bow. The officer gives him his, and all present, both French and Russian, smile and seem pleased.

Here is a bold infantryman in a pink shirt with his cloak thrown over his shoulders, accompanied by other soldiers standing near him with their hands folded behind their backs and with merry inquisitive faces. He has approached a Frenchman and asked for a light for his pipe. The Frenchman draws at and stirs up the tobacco in his own short pipe and shakes a light into that of the Russian.

'Tabac boon?' says the soldier in the pink shirt, and the spectators smile. 'Oui, bon tabac, tabac turc,' says the Frenchman. 'Chez vous autres tabac—Russe? Bon?'⁶

'Roos boon,' says the soldier in the pink shirt while the onlookers shake with laughter. 'Fransay not boon. Bongjour, mossier!', and having let off his whole stock

¹ 'No, monsieur, to the 6th regiment of the line.'

² 'And where did you buy this?'

³ 'At Balaclava, monsieur. It's only made of palm wood.'

⁴ 'Pretty.'

⁵ 'If you will be so good as to keep it as a souvenir of this meeting you will do me a favour.'

⁶ 'Yes, good tobacco, Turkish tobacco . . . You others have Russian tobacco. Is it good?'

of French at once, he slaps the Frenchman on the stomach and laughs. The French also laugh.

'*Ils ne sont pas jolis ces b—— de Russes,*'¹ says a Zouave among the French.

'*De quoi est-ce qu'ils rient donc ?*'² says another with an Italian accent, a dark man, coming up to our men.

'Coat boon,' says the cheeky soldier, examining the embroidery of the Zouave's coat, and everybody laughs again.

'*Ne sors pas de ta ligne, à vos places, sacré nom !*'³ cries a French corporal, and the soldiers separate with evident reluctance.

And here, in the midst of a group of French officers, one of our young cavalry officers is gushing. They are talking about some Count Sazónov, '*que j'ai beaucoup connu, monsieur,*' says a French officer with only one epaulette—'*c'est un de ces vrais comtes russes, comme nous les aimons.*'⁴

'*Il y a un Sazónoff, que j'ai connu,*' says the cavalry officer, '*mais il n'est pas comte, à moins que je sache, un petit brun de votre âge à peu près.*'⁵

'*C'est ça, monsieur, c'est lui. Oh ! que je voudrais le voir, ce cher comte. Si vous le voyez, je vous prie bien de lui faire mes compliments — Capitaine Latour,*'⁶ he said, bowing.

'*N'est-ce pas terrible la triste besogne que nous faisons ? Ça chauffait cette nuit, n'est-ce pas ?*'⁷ said the cavalry

¹ 'They are not handsome, these d—— Russians.'

² 'What are they laughing about?'

³ 'Don't leave your ranks. To your places, damn it!'

⁴ 'Whom I knew very intimately, monsieur. He is one of those real Russian counts of whom we are so fond.'

⁵ 'I am acquainted with a Sazónov, but he is not a count, as far as I know—a small dark man, of about your age.'

⁶ 'Just so, monsieur, that is he. Oh, how I should like to meet the dear count. If you should see him, please be so kind as to give him my compliments—Captain Latour.'

⁷ 'Isn't it terrible, this sad duty we are engaged in? It was warm work last night, wasn't it?'

officer, wishing to maintain the conversation and pointing to the corpses.

*'Oh, monsieur, c'est affreux ! Mais quels gaillards vos soldats, quels gaillards ! C'est un plaisir que de se battre avec des gaillards comme eux.'*¹

*'Il faut avouer que les vôtres ne se mouchent pas du pied non plus,'*² said the cavalry officer, bowing and imagining himself very agreeable.

But enough.

Let us rather look at this ten-year-old boy in an old cap (probably his father's), with shoes on his stockingless feet and nankeen trousers held up by one brace. At the very beginning of the truce he came over the entrenchments, and has been walking about the valley ever since, looking with dull curiosity at the French and at the corpses that lie on the ground and gathering the blue flowers with which the valley is strewn. Returning home with a large bunch of flowers he holds his nose to escape the smell that is borne towards him by the wind, and stopping near a heap of corpses gazes for a long time at a terrible headless body that lies nearest to him. After standing there some time he draws nearer and touches with his foot the stiff outstretched arm of the corpse. The arm trembles a little. He touches it again more boldly; it moves and falls back to its old position. The boy gives a sudden scream, hides his face in his flowers, and runs towards the fortifications as fast as his legs can carry him.

Yes, there are white flags on the bastions and the trenches but the flowery valley is covered with dead bodies. The glorious sun is sinking towards the blue sea, and the undulating blue sea glitters in the golden

¹ 'Ah, monsieur, it is terrible ! But what fine fellows your men are, what fine fellows ! It is a pleasure to fight with such fellows !'

² 'It must be admitted that yours are no fools either.' (Literally, 'don't wipe their noses with their feet'.)

light. Thousands of people crowd together, look at, speak to, and smile at one another. And these people—Christians professing the one great law of love and self-sacrifice—on seeing what they have done do not at once fall repentant on their knees before Him who has given them life and laid in the soul of each a fear of death and a love of the good and the beautiful, and do not embrace like brothers with tears of joy and gladness.

The white flags are lowered, the engines of death and suffering are sounding again, innocent blood is flowing and the air is filled with moans and curses.

There, I have said what I wished to say this time. But I am seized by an oppressive doubt. Perhaps I ought to have left it unsaid. What I have said perhaps belongs to that class of evil truths that lie unconsciously hidden in the soul of each man and should not be uttered lest they become harmful, as the dregs in a bottle must not be disturbed for fear of spoiling the wine. . . .

Where in this tale is the evil that should be avoided, and where the good that should be imitated? Who is the villain and who the hero of the story? All are good and all are bad.

Not Kalúgin, with his brilliant courage—*bravoure de gentilhomme*—and the vanity that influences all his actions, not Praskúkhin, the empty harmless fellow (though he fell in battle for faith, throne, and fatherland), not Mikháylov with his shyness, nor Pesth, a child without firm principles or convictions, can be either the villain or the hero of the tale.

The hero of my tale—whom I love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all his beauty, who has been, is, and will be beautiful—is Truth.

SEVASTOPOL IN AUGUST 1855

I

TOWARDS the end of August, through the hot thick dust of the rocky and hilly highway between Duvánka¹ and Bakhchisaráy, an officer's vehicle was slowly toiling towards Sevastopol (that peculiar kind of vehicle you never meet anywhere else—something between a Jewish *britzka*, a Russian cart, and a basket).

In the front of the trap, pulling at the reins, squatted an orderly in a nankeen coat and wearing a cap, now quite limp, that had once belonged to an officer: behind, on bundles and bales covered with a soldier's overcoat, sat an infantry officer in a summer cloak. The officer, as far as one could judge while he was sitting, was not tall but very broad and massive, not across the shoulders so much as from back to chest. His neck and the back of his head were much developed and very solid. He had no waist, and yet his body did not appear to be stout in that part: on the contrary he was rather lean, especially in the face, which was burnt to an unwholesome yellow. He would have been good-looking had it not been for a certain puffiness and the broad soft wrinkles, not due to age, that blurred the outlines of his features, making them seem larger and giving the face a general look of coarseness and lack of freshness. His small eyes were hazel, with a daring and even insolent expression: he had very thick but not wide moustaches the ends of which were bitten off, and his chin and especially his jaws were covered with an exceedingly strong, thick, black stubble of two days' growth.

This officer had been wounded in the head by a bomb splinter on 10 May² and still wore a bandage,

¹ The last posting-station north of Sevastopol. L. T.

² There were a series of desperate night conflicts on the 9 to 11 May o.s. (21 to 23 May n.s.)

but having felt well again for the past week, he had left the hospital at Simferópol and was now on his way to rejoin his regiment stationed somewhere in the direction of the firing—but whether in Sevastopol itself, on the North Side, or at Inkerman, no one had yet been able to tell him for certain. The sound of frequent firing, especially at times when no hills intercepted it and the wind carried it this way, was already very distinct and seemed quite near. Now an explosion shook the air and made one start involuntarily, now less violent sounds followed one another in quick succession like the roll of drums, broken now and then by a startling boom, and now again all these sounds mingled into a kind of rolling crash, like peals of thunder when a storm is raging in all its fury and rain has just begun to fall in torrents. Everyone was remarking (and one could moreover hear for oneself) that a terrific bombardment was going on. The officer kept telling his orderly to drive faster; he seemed in a hurry to get to his destination. They met a train of Russian peasant-carts that had taken provisions to Sevastopol and were now returning laden with sick and wounded soldiers in grey uniforms, sailors in black cloaks, volunteers with red fezes on their heads, and bearded militiamen. The officer's trap had to stand still in the thick motionless cloud of dust raised by this train of carts and, frowning and blinking at the dust that filled his eyes, he sat looking at the faces of the sick and wounded as they drove past.

"There's a soldier of our company—that one who is so weak!" said the orderly, turning to his master and pointing to a cart laden with wounded men which had just come up to them.

A bearded Russian in a felt hat sat sideways in the front of the cart plaiting the lash of a whip, the handle of which he held to his side with his elbow. Behind him in the cart five or six soldiers were being jolted along, some lying and some sitting in different posi-

tions. One with a bandaged arm and his cloak thrown loosely over his very dirty shirt, though he looked pale and thin, sat upright in the middle of the cart and raised his hand as if to salute the officer, but probably remembering that he was wounded, pretended that he only meant to scratch his head. Beside him on the bottom of the cart lay a man of whom all that was visible was his two hands holding on to the sides of the cart and his lifted knees swaying to and fro like rags. A third, whose face was swollen and who had a soldier's cap stuck on the top of his bandaged head, sat on the side of the cart with his legs hanging down over the wheel, and, resting his elbows on his knees, seemed to be dozing. The officer addressed him: 'Dolzchnikóv!' he cried.

'Here!' answered the soldier, opening his eyes and taking off his cap and speaking in such a deep and abrupt bass that it sounded as if twenty soldiers had shouted all together.

'When were you wounded, lad?'

The soldier's leaden eyes with their swollen lids brightened. He had evidently recognized his officer.

'Good-day, your honour!' said he in the same abrupt bass.

'Where is your regiment stationed now?'

'In Sevastopol. We were going to move on Wednesday, your honour!'

'Where to?'

'Don't know, your honour—to the North Side, maybe. . . . Now they're firing right across, your honour!' he added in a long-drawn tone, replacing his cap. 'Mostly bombs—they reach us right across the bay. *He's* giving it us awful hot now . . .'

What the soldier said further could not be heard, but the expression of his face and his pose showed that his words, spoken with the bitterness of one suffering, were not reassuring.

The officer in the trap, Lieutenant Kozeltsóv, was

not an ordinary type of man. He was not one of those who live and act this way or that because others live and act so: he did what he chose, and others followed his example and felt sure it was right. He was by nature endowed with many minor gifts: he sang well, played the guitar, talked to the point, and wrote very easily (especially official papers—a knack for writing which he had acquired when he was adjutant of his battalion), but his most remarkable characteristic was his ambitious energy, which though chiefly founded on those same minor talents was in itself a marked and striking feature. He had ambition of a kind most frequently found among men and especially in military circles, and this had become so much a part of his life that he could imagine no other course than to lead or to perish. Ambition was at the root of his innermost impulses and even in his private thoughts he liked to put himself first when he compared himself with others.

‘It’s likely I should pay attention to the chatter of a private!’ he muttered, with a feeling of heaviness and apathy at heart and a certain dimness of thought left by the sight of the convoy of wounded men and the words of the soldier, enforced as they were by the sounds of the cannonade.

‘Funny fellow, that soldier! Now then, Nikoláev, get on! . . . Are you asleep?’ he added rather fretfully as he arranged the skirt of his cloak.

Nikoláev jerked the reins, clicked his tongue, and the trap rolled on at a trot.

‘We’ll only stop just to feed the horse, and then go on at once, to-night,’ said the officer.

II

When he was entering what was left of a street of ruined stone Tartar houses in Duvánka, Lieutenant Kozeltsóv was stopped by a convoy of bombs and

cannon-balls on its way to Sevastopol, that blocked the road.

Two infantrymen sat on the stones of a ruined wall amid a cloud of dust, eating a water-melon and some bread.

'Going far, comrade?' asked one of them, with his mouth full of bread, as another soldier with a little bag on his back stopped beside them.

'Going to join our regiment,' answered the soldier, looking past the water-melon and readjusting his bag. 'We've been nearly three weeks in the province looking for hay for our company, and now we've all been recalled, but we don't know where the regiment is. Some say it crossed to the Korábelnaya last week. Perhaps you have heard, friends?'

'In the town, mate. It's quartered in the town,' muttered the other, an old convoy soldier who was digging a clasp-knife into an unripe, whitish water-melon. 'We only left there this afternoon. [It's so awful there, mate, you'd better not go, but fall down here somewhere among the hay and lie there for a day or two!]

'What do you mean, friend?'

'Why, can't you hear? They're firing from all sides to-day, there's not a place left whole. As for the likes of us as has been killed—there's no counting 'em!' And making an expressive gesture with his hand, the speaker set his cap straight.

The soldier who had stopped shook his head thoughtfully and clicked his tongue, then he took a pipe out of the leg of his boot, and not filling it but merely loosening the scorched tobacco in it, he lit a bit of tinder at the pipe of one of the others. Then he raised his cap and said:

'One can't get away from God, friends! Good-bye.' And straightening his bag with a jerk he went his way.

'It would be far better to wait!' the man who was digging into the water-melon said with conviction.

'It can't be helped!' muttered the newcomer, as he squeezed between the wheels of the crowded carts. ['It seems I too must buy a water-melon for my supper. Just think what people are saying!']

III

The post-station was full of people when Kozeltsóv drove up. The first one he met in the porch was a very thin young man, the superintendent, bickering with two officers who were following him.

'It's not only three days you'll have to wait but maybe ten. . . . Even generals have to wait, my good sir!' said the superintendent, evidently wishing to hurt the travellers' feelings. 'I can't hitch myself to a cart for you, can I?'

'Then don't give horses to anyone, if you have none! Why did you give them to that lackey with the baggage?' shouted the elder of the officers, who had a tumbler of tea in his hand.

'Just consider a moment, Mr. Superintendent,' said the other, a very young officer, hesitatingly. 'We are not going for our own pleasure. You see, we are evidently wanted there, since we have been summoned. I shall really have to report it to the general. It will never do, you know. . . . It seems you don't respect an officer's position.'

But the elder man interrupted him crossly. 'You always spoil everything! You only hinder me . . . a man has to know how to speak to these people. There you see, he has lost all respect. . . . Horses, I say, this very minute!'

'Willingly, my dear sir, but where am I to get them from?'

The superintendent was silent for a few minutes. Then he suddenly flared up and waving his arms began:

'I know it all very well, my dear sir, and fully

understand it, but what am I to do? You give me but' (a ray of hope showed itself on the faces of the officers) . . . 'let me but hold out to the end of the month, and I'll stay here no longer. I'd rather go to the Malákhov Hill than remain here, I swear I would! Let them do what they please. There's not a single sound vehicle left in the whole place, and it's the third day the horses haven't had a wisp of hay.' And the superintendent disappeared through the gate.

Kozeltsóv entered the room together with the officers.

'Well,' said the elder calmly to the younger, though the moment before he had seemed quite beside himself, 'we've been three months on the road already and can wait a bit longer. No matter, we'll get there soon enough!'

The dirty, smoky room was so full of officers and trunks that Kozeltsóv had some difficulty in finding a seat on the window-sill. While observing the faces and listening to the conversation of the others he began rolling himself a cigarette. To the right of the door sat the principal group round a crooked, greasy table on which stood two samovars with verdigris showing on them here and there, and with sugar spread on various bits of paper. A young officer who had not yet grown a moustache, in a new, quilted Caucasian coat which had certainly been made out of a woman's dressing-gown, was filling a teapot, and there were four other equally young officers in different parts of the room. One of them lay asleep on the sofa with a fur coat of some kind rolled up under his head; another was standing at the table cutting up some roast mutton for a one-armed officer who sat there. Two officers, one in an adjutant's cloak, the other in infantry uniform made of fine cloth and with a satchel across his shoulders, were sitting by the stove, and from the way they looked at the others and the manner in which the one with the satchel

smoked his cigar, it was plain that they were not officers of the line and were glad they were not. Their manner did not show contempt so much as a certain calm self-satisfaction founded partly on money and partly on intimacy with generals—a consciousness of superiority extending even to a desire to conceal it. Then there was a thick-lipped young doctor and an artillery officer who looked like a German—these were sitting on the sofa almost on the feet of the sleeping officer, counting money. There were also several orderlies, some dozing, others near the door busy with bundles and portmanteaux. Among all these people Kozeltsóv did not recognize a single acquaintance, but he listened with interest to their conversation. He liked the young officers who, as he at once concluded from their appearance, had come straight from the Cadet College; they reminded him of the fact that his brother, who was coming straight from the College too, ought to reach one of the batteries in Sevastopol in a few days' time. But he did not like the officer with the satchel, whose face he had seen somewhere before—everything about him seemed insolent and repellent. 'We'll put him down if he ventures to say anything!' he thought, and he even moved from the window to the stove and sat down there. Belonging to a line regiment and being a good officer, he had a general dislike for those 'on the Staff', and such he at once recognized these officers to be.

IV

'I say, isn't it an awful nuisance that being so near we can't get there?' said one of the young officers. 'There may be an action to-day and we shan't be in it.'

The high-pitched voice and the fresh rosy spots which appeared on his face betrayed the charming youthful bashfulness of one in constant fear of not saying the right thing.

The officer who had lost an arm looked at him with a smile.

'You'll get there soon enough, believe me,' he said.

The young officer looked respectfully at the crippled man, whose emaciated face suddenly lit up with a smile, and then silently turned his attention to making his tea. And really the face, the attitude, and especially the empty sleeve of the officer expressed a kind of calm indifference that seemed to say in reply to every word and action: 'Yes, all that is admirable, but I know it all, and can do it all if only I wish to.'

'Well, and how shall we decide it?' the young officer began again, turning to his comrade in the Caucasian coat. 'Shall we stay the night here or go on with our own horse?'

His comrade decided to stay.

'Just fancy, Captain,' continued the one who was making the tea, addressing the one-armed officer and handing him a knife he had dropped, 'we are told that horses were awfully dear in Sevastopol, so we two bought one together in Simferópol.'

'I expect they made you pay a stiff price.'

'I really don't know, Captain. We paid ninety rubles for it with the trap. Is that very much?' he said, turning to the company in general, including Kozeltsóv, who was looking at him.

'It's not much if it's a young horse,' said Kozeltsóv.

'You think not? . . . And we were told it was too much. Only it limps a bit, but that will pass. We were told it's strong.'

'What Cadet College were you at?' asked Kozeltsóv, who wished to get news of his brother.

'We are now from the Nobles' Regiment. There are six of us and we are all going to Sevastopol—by our own desire,' said the talkative young officer. 'Only we don't know where our battery is. Some say it is Sevastopol, but those fellows there say it's in Odessa.'

'Couldn't you have found out in Simferópol?' asked Kozeltsóv.

'They didn't know. . . . Only think, one of our comrades went to the Chancellery there and got nothing but rudeness. Just think how unpleasant! Would you like a ready-made cigarette?' he said to the one-armed officer who was trying to get out his cigar-case.

He attended to this officer's wants with a kind of servile enthusiasm.

'And are you from Sevastopol too?' he continued. 'How wonderful it is! How all of us in Petersburg used to think about you all and all our heroes!' he said, addressing Kozeltsóv with respect and kindly affection.

'Well then, you may find that you have to go back?' asked the lieutenant.

'That's just what we are afraid of. Just fancy, when we had bought the horse and got all we needed—a coffee-pot with a spirit-lamp and other necessary little things—we had no money left at all,' he said in a low tone, glancing at his comrade, 'so that if we have to return we don't at all know how we are to manage.'

'Didn't you receive your travelling allowance, then?' asked Kozeltsóv.

'No,' answered the young officer in a whisper, 'they promised to give it us here.'

'Have you the certificate?'

'I know that a certificate is the principal thing, but when I was in Moscow, a senator—he's my uncle and I was at his house—told me they would give it to me here, or else he would have given it me himself. But will they give me one in Sevastopol?'

'Certainly they will.'

'Yes, I think so too,' said the lad in a tone which showed that, having asked the same question at some thirty other post-stations and having everywhere received different answers, he did not now quite believe anyone.

V

(Previously suppressed by the Censor)

['How can they help giving it?' suddenly remarked the officer who had quarrelled with the station-master on the porch and had now approached the speakers, addressing himself partly to the staff-officers who were sitting near by, as to listeners more worthy of attention. 'Why, I myself wanted to join the active army just as these gentlemen do. I even gave up a splendid post and asked to be sent right into Sevastopol. And they gave me nothing but a hundred and thirty-six rubles for post-horses from Petersburg and I have already spent more than a hundred and fifty rubles of my own money. Only think of it! It's only eight hundred versts and this is the third month we have been on the way. I have been travelling with these gentlemen here for two months. A good thing I had money of my own, but suppose I hadn't had any?']

'The third month? Is it possible?' someone asked.

'Yes, and what can one do?' the speaker continued. 'You see if I had not wanted to go I would not have volunteered and left a good post, so I haven't been stopping at places on the road because I was afraid. . . . It was just impossible. For instance I lived a fortnight in Perekóp, and the station-master wouldn't even speak to me. . . . "Go when you like; here are a whole pile of requisition forms for couriers alone." . . . It must be my fate. . . . You see I want—but it's just my fate. It's not because there's a bombardment going on, but it evidently makes no difference whether one hurries or not—and yet how I should like. . . .'

The officer was at such pains to explain his delays and seemed so keen to vindicate himself that it involuntarily occurred to one that he was afraid. This was still more evident when he began to ask where his regiment was, and whether it was dangerous there. He even grew pale and his voice faltered when

the one-armed officer, who belonged to the same regiment, told him that during those last two days they had lost seventeen officers.

In fact this officer was just then a thorough coward, though six months previously he had been very different. A change had come over him which many others experienced both before and after him. He had had an excellent and quiet post in one of our provincial towns in which there is a Cadet College, but reading in the papers and in private letters of the heroic deeds performed at Sevastopol by his former comrades, he was suddenly inspired by ambition and still more by patriotic heroism.

He sacrificed much to this feeling: his well-established position, his little home with its comfortable furniture painstakingly acquired by five years' effort, his acquaintances, and his hopes of making a good marriage. He threw all this up, and in February already had volunteered for active service, dreaming of deathless honours and of a general's epaulettes. Two months after he had sent in his application he received an official inquiry whether he would require assistance from the government. He replied in the negative, and continued to wait patiently for an appointment, though his patriotic ardour had had time to cool considerably during those eight weeks. After another two months he received an inquiry as to whether he belonged to a Freemasons' Lodge,¹ and other similar questions, and having replied in the negative, he at last, in the fifth month, received his appointment. But all that time his friends, and still more that subconscious feeling which always awakens

¹ A number of Freemasons were involved in the Decembrist mutiny in 1825, when Nicholas I ascended the throne. He was consequently very suspicious of that organization, which at the time of the Crimean War was prohibited in Russia. The inquiry made would therefore be offensive to a loyal and patriotic volunteer.

at any change in one's position, had had time to convince him that he was committing an act of extreme folly by entering the active army. And when he found himself alone, with a dry throat and his face covered with dust, at the first post-station—where he met a courier from Sevastopol who told him of the horrors of the war, and where he had to spend twelve hours waiting for relay horses—he quite repented of his thoughtlessness, reflecting with vague horror on what awaited him, and without realizing it continued on his way as to a sacrifice. This feeling constantly increased during his three months' travelling from station to station, at which he always had to wait and where he met officers returning from Sevastopol with dreadful stories, and at last this poor officer—from being a hero prepared for desperate deeds, as in the provincial town he had imagined himself to be—arrived in Djánka a wretched coward, and having a month ago come across some young fellows from the Cadet College, he tried to travel as slowly as possible, considering these days to be his last on earth, and at every station put up his bed, unpacked his canteen, played preference, looked through the station complaint-book for amusement, and felt glad when horses were not to be had.

Had he gone at once from home to the bastions he would really have been a hero, but now he would have to go through much moral suffering before he could become such a calm, patient man, facing toil and danger, as Russian officers generally are. But it would by this time have been difficult to reawaken enthusiasm in him.]

VI

'Who ordered soup?' demanded the landlady, a rather dirty, fat woman of about forty, as she came into the room with a tureen of cabbage-soup.

The conversation immediately stopped, and every-

one in the room fixed his eyes on the landlady. One officer even winked to another with a glance at her.

'Oh, Kozeltsóv ordered it,' said the young officer. 'We must wake him up. . . . Get up for dinner!' he said, going up to the sofa and shaking the sleeper's shoulder. A lad of about seventeen, with merry black eyes and very rosy cheeks, jumped up energetically and stepped into the middle of the room rubbing his eyes.

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' he said to the doctor, whom he had knocked against in rising.

Lieutenant Kozeltsóv at once recognized his brother and went up to him.

'Don't you know me?' he asked with a smile.

'Ah-h-h!' cried the younger Kozeltsóv. 'This is wonderful!' And he began kissing his brother.

They kissed three times, but hesitated before the third kiss, as if the thought, 'Why has it to be just three times?' had struck them both.

'Well, I *am* glad!' said the elder, looking into his brother's face. 'Come out into the porch and let's have a chat.'

'Yes, come along. I don't want any soup. You eat it, Féderson,' he said to his comrade.

'But you wanted something to eat.'

'I don't want anything now.'

Out on the porch the younger one kept asking his brother: 'Well, and how are you? Tell me how things are!' and saying how glad he was to see him, but he did not tell him anything about himself.

When five minutes had passed and they had paused for a moment, the elder brother asked why the younger had not entered the Guards as everyone had expected him to do.

['Oh, yes!' the younger replied, blushing at the very recollection, 'that upsets me terribly. I never expected such a thing could happen. Just imagine, at the very end of the term three of us went to have a smoke—you remember that little room by the hall-

porter's lodge? It must have been there in your time—but just imagine, that beast of a hall-porter saw us and ran to tell the officer on duty (though we had tipped that porter several times) and the officer crept up on tiptoe. As soon as we noticed him the others threw away their cigarettes and bolted out by the side door—you know—but I hadn't the chance. The officer was very nasty to me, and of course I answered him back. Well, he told the Inspector, and there was a row. Because of that, you see, they didn't give me full marks for conduct, though for everything else my marks were excellent, except for mechanics, for which I got twelve. And so they wouldn't let me enter the Guards. They promised to transfer me later . . . but I no longer wanted it, and applied to be sent to the front.'

'Dear me!'

'Really, I tell you seriously, I was so disgusted with everything that] I wanted to get to Sevastopol as quickly as possible. And you see, if things turn out well here one can get on quicker than in the Guards. There it takes ten years to become a colonel, but here in two years Todleben from a lieutenant-colonel has become a general. And if one gets killed—well, it can't be helped.'

'So that's the sort of stuff you are made of!' said his brother, with a smile.

'But the chief thing, you know,' said the younger brother, smiling and blushing as if he were going to say something very shameful—'the chief thing was that I felt rather ashamed to be living in Petersburg while here men are dying for the Fatherland. And besides, I wanted to be with you,' he added, still more shyly.

The other did not look at him. 'What a funny fellow you are!' he said, taking out his cigarette-case. 'Only the pity is that we shan't be together.'

'I say, tell me quite frankly: is it very dreadful at the bastions?' asked the younger suddenly.

'It seems dreadful at first but one gets used to it. You'll see for yourself.'

'Yes . . . and another thing: Do you think they will take Sevastopol? I don't think they will. I'm certain they won't.'

'Heaven only knows.'

'It's so provoking. . . . Just think what a misfortune! Do you know, we've had a whole bundle of things stolen on the way and my shako was inside so that I am in a terrible position. Whatever shall I appear in? [You know we have new shakos now, and in general there are many changes, all improvements. I can tell you all about it. I have been everywhere in Moscow.]

The younger Kozeltsóv, Vladímir, was very like his brother Michael, but it was the likeness of an opening rosebud to a withered dog-rose. He had the same fair hair as his brother, but it was thick and curled about his temples, and a little tuft of it grew down the delicate white nape of his neck—a sign of luck according to the nurses. The delicate white skin of his face did not always show colour, but the full young blood rushing to it betrayed his every emotion. His eyes were like his brother's, but more open and brighter, and seemed especially so because a slight moisture often made them glisten. Soft, fair down was beginning to appear on his cheeks and above the red lips, on which a shy smile often played disclosing his white and glistening teeth. Straight, broad-shouldered, the uniform over his red Russian shirt unbuttoned—as he stood there before his brother, cigarette in hand, leaning against the banisters of the porch, his face and attitude expressing naïve joy, he was such a charming, handsome boy that one could not help wishing to look at him. He was very pleased to see his brother, and looked at him with respect and pride, imagining him to be a hero; but in some respects, namely, in what in society is considered good

form (being able to speak good French, knowing how to behave in the presence of people of high position, dancing, and so on) he was rather ashamed of his brother, looked down on him, and even hoped if possible to educate him. All his views were still those he had acquired in Petersburg, particularly in the house of a lady who liked good-looking lads and had got him to spend his holidays at her house; and at a senator's house in Moscow, where he had once danced at a grand ball.

VII

Having talked almost their fill, and reached that stage which often comes when two people find that though they are fond of one another they have little in common, the brothers remained silent for some time.

'Well then, collect your things and let us be off!' said the elder.

The younger suddenly blushed and became confused.

'Do we go straight to Sevastopol?' he asked after a moment's silence.

'Well of course. You haven't got much luggage, I suppose. We'll get it all in.'

'All right! Let's start at once,' said the younger with a sigh, and went towards the room.

But he stopped in the passage without opening the door, hung his head sorrowfully and began thinking.

'Now, at once, straight to Sevastopol . . . into that hell . . . terrible! Ah well, never mind. It had to be sooner or later. And now at least I'll have my brother with me. . . .'

In fact, only now, at the thought that after getting into the trap there would be nothing more to detain him and that he would not alight again before reaching Sevastopol, did he clearly realize the danger he had been seeking, and he grew confused and frightened at the mere thought of the nearness of that danger.

Having mastered himself as well as he could, he went into the room; but a quarter of an hour passed and he did not return to his brother, so the latter at last opened the door to call him. The younger Kozeltsóv, in the attitude of a guilty schoolboy, was talking to an officer. When his brother opened the door he seemed quite disconcerted.

'Yes, yes, I'm just coming!' he cried, waving his hand to prevent his brother coming in. 'Please wait for me there.'

A few minutes later he came out and went up to his brother with a sigh. 'Just fancy,' he said, 'it turns out that I can't go with you, after all!'

'What? What nonsense!'

'I'll tell you the whole truth, Mísha . . . none of us have any money left and we are all in debt to that lieutenant-captain whom you saw in there. It's such a shame!'

The elder brother frowned, and remained silent for some time.

'Do you owe much?' he asked at last, looking at his brother from under his brows.

'Much? No, not very much, but I feel terribly ashamed. He paid for me at three post-stations, and the sugar was always his, so that I don't. . . . Yes, and we played preference . . . and I lost a little to him.'

'That's bad, Volódya! Now what would you have done if you hadn't met me?' the elder remarked sternly without looking at him.

'Well, you see, I thought I'd pay when I got my travelling allowance in Sevastopol. I could do that, couldn't I? . . . So I'd better drive on with him to-morrow.'

The elder brother drew out his purse and with slightly trembling fingers produced two ten-ruble notes and one of three rubles.

'There's the money I have,' he said. 'How much do you owe?'

Kozeltsóv did not speak quite truly when he made it appear as if this were all the money he had. He had four gold coins sewn into his cuff in case of special need, but he had resolved not to touch them.

As it turned out the younger Kozeltsóv owed only eight rubles, including the sugar and the preference, his brother gave them to him, merely remarking that it would never do to go playing preference when one had no money.

‘How high did you play?’

The younger did not reply. The question seemed to suggest a doubt of his honour.

Vexed with himself, ashamed of having done anything that could give rise to such suspicions, and hurt at such offensive words from the brother he so loved, his impressionable nature suffered so keenly that he did not answer. Feeling that he could not suppress the sobs that were gathering in his throat he took the money without looking at it and returned to his comrades.

VIII

Nikoláev, who had fortified himself in Duvánka with two cups of vodka¹ sold by a soldier he had met on the bridge, kept pulling at the reins, and the trap bumped along the stony road that leads by the Belbék² to Sevastopol. The two brothers, their legs touching as they jolted along, sat in obstinate silence though they never ceased to think about each other.

‘Why did he say that?’ thought the younger. ‘Couldn’t he have left it unsaid? Just as if he thought me a thief! And I believe he’s still angry, so that we have gone apart for good. And yet how fine it would have been for us to be together in Sevastopol! Two brothers, friends with one another, fighting the enemy

¹ Vodka is a spirit distilled from rye. It is the commonest form of strong drink in Russia.

² The Belbék is a river.

side by side: one, the elder, not highly educated but a brave warrior, and the other young but . . . also a fine fellow. . . . In a week's time I would have proved to everybody that I am not so very young! I shall leave off blushing and my face will look manly; my moustaches, too, will have grown by that time—not very big but quite sufficiently,' and he pulled at the short down that showed at the corners of his mouth. 'Perhaps when we get there to-day we may go straight into action, he and I together. And I'm certain he is very brave and steadfast—a man who says little, but does more than others. I wonder whether he is pushing me to the very edge of the trap on purpose? I expect he knows I am uncomfortable but pretends he doesn't notice me.' Pressing close to the edge of the trap for fear of his brother's noticing his discomfort, he continued his meditations: 'Well then, we shall get there to-day, and then perhaps straight to the bastion—I with the guns and my brother with his company, both together. Suddenly the French will fall upon us. I shall fire and fire. I shall kill quite a lot of them, but they will still keep coming straight at me. I can no longer fire and of course there is no escape for me, but suddenly my brother rushes to the front with his sword drawn and I seize a musket, and we run on with the soldiers. The French attack my brother: I run forward, kill one Frenchman, then another, and save my brother. I am wounded in the arm, I seize the gun in the other hand and still run on. Then my brother falls at my side, shot dead by a bullet. I stop for a moment, bend sadly over him, draw myself up and cry: "Follow me, we will avenge him! I loved my brother more than anything on earth," I shall say. "I have lost him. Let us avenge him, let us annihilate the foe or let us all die here!" They will all rush after me shouting. Then all the French army, with Pélissier himself, will advance. We shall slaughter them, but at last I shall be wounded

a second and a third time and shall fall down dying. Then they will all rush to me and Gorchakov himself will come and ask if I want anything. I shall say that I want nothing—only to be laid near my brother: that I wish to die beside him. They will carry me and lay me down by the blood-stained corpse of my brother. I shall raise myself, and say only, "Yes, you did not know how to value two men who really loved the Fatherland: now they have both fallen. May God forgive you!" . . . and then I'll die.'

Who knows how much of these dreams will come true?

'I say, have you ever been in a hand-to-hand fight?' he suddenly asked, having quite forgotten that he was not going to speak to his brother.

'No, never,' answered the elder. 'We lost two thousand men from the regiment, but it was all at the trenches, and I was wounded while doing my work there. War is not carried on at all in the way you imagine, Volodya.'

The pet name Volodya touched the younger brother. He longed to put matters right with the elder, who had no idea that he had given offence.

'You are not angry with me, Misha?' he asked after a minute's pause.

'Angry? What for?'

'Oh, nothing . . . only because of what happened . . . it's nothing.'

'Not at all,' answered the other, turning towards him and slapping him on the knee.

'Then forgive me if I have pained you, Misha!' And the younger brother turned away to hide the tears that suddenly filled his eyes.

IX

'Can this be Sevastopol already?' asked the younger brother when they reached the top of the hill.

Spread out before them they saw the Roadstead

with the masts of the ships, the sea with the enemy's fleet in the distance, the white shore-batteries, the barracks, the aqueducts, the docks, the buildings of the town, and the white and purple clouds of smoke that, rising continually from the yellow hills surrounding the town, floated in the blue sky lit up by the rosy rays of the sun, which was reflected brilliantly in the sea towards whose dark horizon it was already sinking.

Volódya looked without the slightest trepidation at the dreadful place that had so long been in his mind. He even gazed with concentrated attention at this really splendid and unique sight, feeling aesthetic pleasure and an heroic sense of satisfaction at the thought that in another half-hour he would be there, and he continued gazing until they came to the commissariat of his brother's regiment, on the North Side, where they had to ascertain the exact location of the regiment and of the battery.

The officer in charge of the commissariat lived near the so-called 'new town' (a number of wooden sheds constructed by the sailors' families) in a tent connected with a good-sized shed constructed of green oak branches that had not yet had time to dry completely.

The brothers found the officer seated at a dirty table on which stood a tumbler of cold tea, a tray with a vodka bottle, and bits of dry caviare and bread. He was wearing a dirty yellowish shirt, and, with the aid of a big abacus, was counting an enormous pile of bank-notes. But before speaking of the personality of this officer and of his conversation, we must examine the interior of the shed more attentively and see something of his occupations and way of living. His newly built shed was as big, as strongly wattled, and as conveniently arranged with tables and seats made of turf, as though it were built for a general or the commander of a regiment. To keep the dry leaves from falling in, the top and sides were lined

with three carpets, which though hideous were new and must have cost money. On the iron bedstead, beside which a most striking carpet was fastened to the wall (the pattern of which represented a lady on horseback), lay a bright red plush coverlet, a torn and dirty leather pillow, and an overcoat lined with racoon fur. On the table was a looking-glass in a silver frame, an exceedingly dirty silver-backed hair-brush, a broken horn comb full of greasy hair, a silver candlestick, a bottle of liqueur with an enormous red and gold label, a gold watch with a portrait of Peter I, two gold rings, a box of some kind of capsules, a crust of bread, and a scattered pack of old cards. Bottles, full and empty, were stowed away under the bed. This officer was in charge of the regimental commissariat and the forage for the horses. With him lived his great friend, the commissioner employed on contracts. When the brothers entered, the latter was asleep in the tent while the commissariat officer was making up the regimental accounts for the month. He had a very handsome and military appearance: tall, with large moustaches and a portly figure. What was unpleasant about him was merely that his white face was so puffy as almost to hide his small grey eyes (as if he were filled with porter), and his extreme lack of cleanliness, from his thin greasy hair to his big bare feet thrust into ermine-lined slippers of some kind.

‘What a heap of money!’ said the elder Kozeltsóv on entering the shed, as he fixed his eyes eagerly on the pile of banknotes. ‘If only you’d lend me half, Vasili Mikháylovich!’

The commissariat officer shrank back when he saw his visitor, as if caught stealing, and gathering up the money bowed without rising.

‘Oh, if it were mine! But it’s Government money, my dear fellow. . . . And who is that with you?’ he asked, placing the money in a cash-box that stood near him and looking at Volódya.

'It's my brother, straight from the training college. We've come to learn from you where our regiment is stationed.'

'Take a seat, gentlemen. Won't you have something to drink? A glass of porter perhaps?' he said, and without taking any further notice of his visitors he rose and went out into the tent.

'I don't mind if I do, Vasíli Mikháylovich.'

Volódya was struck by the grandeur of the commissariat officer, his off-hand manner, and the respect with which his brother addressed him.

'I expect this is one of their best officers, whom they all respect—probably simple-minded but hospitable and brave,' he thought as he sat down modestly and shyly on the sofa.

'Then where is our regiment stationed?' shouted the elder brother across to the tent.

'What?'

The question was repeated.

'Seifert was here this morning. He says the regiment has gone over to the Fifth Bastion.'

'Is that certain?'

'If I say so of course it's certain. Still, the devil only knows if he told the truth! It wouldn't take much to make him tell a lie either. Well, will you have some porter?' said the commissariat officer, still speaking from the tent.

'Well, yes, I think I will,' said Kozeltsóv.

'And you, Osip Ignátevich, will you have some?' continued the voice from the tent, apparently addressing the sleeping contractor. 'Wake up, it's past four!'

'Why do you bother me? I'm not asleep,' answered a thin voice lazily, pronouncing the *ls* and *rs* with a pleasant lisp.

'Well, get up, it's dull without you,' and the commissariat officer came out to his visitors.

'A bottle of Simferópol porter!' he cried.

The orderly entered the shed with an expression of pride as it seemed to Volódya, and in getting the porter from under the seat he even jostled Volódya.

['Yes, sir,' said the commissariat officer, filling the glasses. 'We have a new commander of the regiment now. Money is needed to get all that is required.')

'Well, this one is quite a special type of the new generation,' remarked Kozeltsóv, politely raising his glass.

'Yes, of a new generation! He'll be just as close-fisted as the battalion-commander was. How he used to shout when he was in command! But now he sings a different tune.'

'Can't be helped, old fellow. It just is so.'

The younger brother understood nothing of what was being said, but vaguely felt that his brother was not expressing what he thought, and spoke in that way only because he was drinking the commissariat officer's porter.]

The bottle of porter was already emptied and the conversation had continued for some time in the same strain, when the flap of the tent opened and out stepped a rather short, fresh-looking man in a blue satin dressing-gown with tassels and a cap with a red band and a cockade. He came in twisting his little black moustaches, looking somewhere in the direction of one of the carpets, and answered the greetings of the officers with a scarcely perceptible movement of the shoulders.

'I think I'll have a glass too,' he said, sitting down to the table.

'Have you come from Petersburg, young man?' he remarked, addressing Volódya in a friendly manner.

'Yes, sir, and I'm going to Sevastopol.'

'At your own request?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Now why do you do it, gentlemen? I don't under-

stand it,' remarked the commissioner. 'I'd be ready to walk to Petersburg on foot, I think, if they'd let me go. My God, I'm sick of this damned life!'

'What have you to complain of?' asked the elder Kozeltsóv—'As if you weren't well enough off here!'

The contractor gave him a look and turned away.

'The danger, privations, lack of everything,' he continued, addressing Volódya. 'Whatever induces you to do it? I don't at all understand you, gentlemen. If you got any profit out of it—but no! Now would it be pleasant, at your age, to be crippled for life?'

'Some want to make a profit and others serve for honour,' said the elder Kozeltsóv crossly, again intervening in the conversation.

'Where does the honour come in if you've nothing to eat?' said the contractor, laughing disdainfully and addressing the commissariat officer, who also laughed. 'Wind up and let's have the tune from *Lucia*,' he added, pointing to a musical box. 'I like it.'

'What sort of a fellow is that Vasíli Mikháýlovich?' asked Volódya when he and his brother had left the shed and were driving to Sevastopol in the dusk of the evening.

'So-so, but terribly stingy! [You know he gets at least three hundred rubles a month, but lives like a pig, as you saw.] But that contractor I can't bear to look at. I'll give him a thrashing some day! [Why, that rascal carried off some twelve thousand rubles from Turkey. . . .']

And Kozeltsóv began to enlarge on the subject of usury, rather (to tell the truth) with the bitterness of one who condemns it not because it is an evil, but because he is vexed that there are people who take advantage of it.]

X

It was almost night when they reached Sevastopol. Driving towards the large bridge across the Roadstead Volódya was not exactly dispirited, but his heart was heavy. All he saw and heard was so different from his past, still recent, experience: the large, light examination hall with its parquet floor, the jolly, friendly voices and laughter of his comrades, the new uniform, the beloved Tsar he had been accustomed to see for the past seven years, and who at parting from them with tears in his eyes had called them his children—all he saw now was so little like his beautiful, radiant, high-souled dreams.

‘Well, here we are,’ said the elder brother when they reached the Michael Battery and dismounted from their trap. ‘If they let us cross the bridge we will go at once to the Nicholas Barracks. You can stay there till the morning, and I’ll go to the regiment and find out where your battery is and come for you to-morrow.’

‘Oh, why? Let’s go together,’ said Volódya. ‘I’ll go to the bastion with you. It doesn’t matter. One must get used to it sooner or later. If you go, so can I.’

‘Better not.’

‘Yes, please! I shall at least find out how. . . .’

‘My advice is don’t go . . . however——’

The sky was clear and dark. The stars, the flash of the guns and the continual flare of the bombs already showed up brightly in the darkness, and the large white building of the battery and the entry to the bridge¹ loomed out. The air was shaken every

¹ This pontoon bridge was erected during the summer of 1855. At first it was feared that the water was too rough in the Roadstead for a secure bridge to be built, but it served its purpose, and later on even stood the strain put upon it by the retreat of the Russian army to the North Side.

second by a quick succession of artillery shots and explosions which became ever louder and more distinct. Through this roar, and as if answering it, came the dull murmur of the Roadstead. A slight breeze blew in from the sea and the air smelt moist. The brothers reached the bridge. A recruit, awkwardly striking his gun against his hand, called out, 'Who goes there?'

'Soldier!'

'No one's allowed to pass!'

'How is that? We must.'

'Ask the officer.'

The officer, who was sitting on an anchor dozing, rose and ordered that they should be allowed to pass.

'You may go there, but not back.'

'Where are you driving, all of a heap?' he shouted to the regimental wagons which, laden high with gabions, were crowding the entrance.

As the brothers were descending to the first pontoon, they came upon some soldiers going the other way and talking loudly.

'If he's had his outfit money his account is squared—that's so.'

'Ah, lads,' said another, 'when one gets to the North Side one sees light again. It's a different air altogether.'

'Is it though?' said the first. 'Why, only the other day a damned ball flew over and tore two soldiers' legs off for them, even there. . . .'

Waiting for the trap the brothers after crossing the first pontoon stopped on the second, which was washed here and there by the waves. The wind which seemed gentle on land was strong and gusty here; the bridge swayed and the waves broke noisily against beams, anchors, and ropes, and washed over the boards. To the right, divided from the light blue-grey starry horizon by a smooth, endless black line, was the sea, dark, misty, and with a hostile sullen roar.

Far off in the distance gleamed the lights of the enemy's fleet. To the left loomed the black hulk of one of our ships, against whose sides the waves beat audibly. A steamer too was visible moving quickly and noisily from the North Side. The flash of a bomb exploding near the steamer lit up for a moment the gabions piled high on its deck, two men standing on the paddle-box, and the white foam and splash of the greenish waves cut by the vessel. On the edge of the bridge, his feet dangling in the water, a man in his shirt sat chopping something on the pontoon. In front, above Sevastopol, similar flashes were seen, and the terrible sounds became louder and louder. A wave flowing in from the sea washed over the right side of the bridge and wetted Volódya's boots, and two soldiers passed by him splashing their feet through the water. Suddenly something came crashing down which lit up the bridge ahead of them, a cart driving over it, and a horseman, and fragments of a bomb fell whistling and splashing into the water.

'Ah, Michael Semënich!'¹ said the rider, stopping his horse in front of the elder Kozeltsóv. 'Have you recovered?'

'As you see. And where is fate taking you?'

'To the North Side for cartridges. You see I'm taking the place of the regimental adjutant to-day. . . . We're expecting an attack from hour to hour.'

'And where is Mártsóv?'

¹ In addressing anyone in Russian, it is usual to employ the Christian name and patronymic: i.e. to the Christian name (in this case Michael) the father's Christian name is joined (in this case Semën) with the termination *vich* (*o-vich* or *e-vich*) which means 'son of'. The termination is often shortened to *ich*, and colloquially to *ych*. Surnames are less used than in English, for the patronymic is suitable for all circumstances of life—both for speaking to and of any one—except that people on very intimate terms use only the Christian name, or a pet name.

'His leg was torn off yesterday while he was sleeping in his room in town. . . . Did you know him?'

'Is it true that the regiment is at the Fifth Bastion now?'

'Yes, we have replaced the M— regiment. You'd better call at the Ambulance, you'll find some of our fellows there—they'll show you the way.'

'And my lodgings in the Morskáya Street, are they safe?'

'Safe, my dear fellow! They've long since been shattered by bombs. You won't know Sevastopol again. Not a woman left, not a restaurant, no music! The last brothel left yesterday. It's melancholy enough now. Good-bye!'

And the officer trotted away.

Terrible fear suddenly overcame Volódya. He felt as if a ball or a bomb-splinter would come the next moment and hit him straight on the head. The damp darkness, all these sounds, especially the murmur of the splashing water—all seemed to tell him to go no farther, that no good awaited him here, that he would never again set foot on this side of the bay, that he should turn back at once and run somewhere as far as possible from this dreadful place of death. 'But perhaps it is too late, it is already decided now,' thought he shuddering, partly at that thought and partly because the water had soaked through his boots and was making his feet wet.

He sighed deeply and moved a few steps away from his brother.

'O Lord! Shall I really be killed—just I? Lord, have mercy on me!' he whispered, and made the sign of the cross.

'Well, Volódya, come on!' said the elder brother when the trap had driven on to the bridge. 'Did you see the bomb?'

On the bridge they met carts loaded with wounded men, with gations, and one with furniture driven

by a woman. No one stopped them at the farther side.

Keeping instinctively under the wall of the Nicholas Battery and listening to the bombs that here were bursting overhead, and to the howling of the falling fragments, the brothers came silently to that part of the battery where the icon hangs. Here they heard that the Fifth Light Artillery, to which Volódya was appointed, was stationed at the Korábelnaya¹ and they decided that Volódya, in spite of the danger, should spend the night with his elder brother at the Fifth Bastion and go from there to his battery next morning. After turning into a corridor and stepping across the legs of the soldiers who lay sleeping all along the wall of the battery they at last reached the Ambulance Station.

XI

On entering the first room, full of beds on which lay wounded men and permeated by a horribly disgusting hospital smell, they met two Sisters of Mercy just going out.

One, a woman of fifty, with black eyes and a stern expression, was carrying bandages and lint and giving orders to a young lad, a medical assistant, who was following her. The other, a very pretty girl of about twenty whose pale, delicate, fair face looked from under her white cap with a peculiarly sweet helplessness, was walking by the side of the older woman with her hands in her apron pockets, and seemed afraid of being left behind.

Kozeltsóv asked them if they knew where Mártsóv was, whose leg had been torn off the day before.

¹ The Korábelnaya was a suburb of Sevastopol lying to the east of the South Bay and to the south of the Roadstead. Like the 'North Side' it was connected with Sevastopol by a floating bridge. (See map.)

'He is of the P— regiment, I think?' asked the elder. 'Is he a relation of yours?'

'No, just a comrade.'

'Take them to him,' she said to the young sister in French. 'It is this way,' and she herself went up to one of the patients, followed by the assistant.

'Come along, what are you looking at?' said Kozeltsóv to Volódya, who stood with raised eyebrows and a look of suffering on his face, unable to tear his eyes from the wounded. 'Come now!'

Volódya followed his brother but still kept looking back and repeating unconsciously, 'O, my God! My God!'

'I suppose he has not been here long?' the sister remarked to Kozeltsóv, indicating Volódya, who followed them along the corridor with exclamations and sighs.

'He has only just come.'

The pretty sister looked at Volódya and suddenly began to cry.

'My God! My God! When will it all end?' she said in a despairing voice.

They entered the officers' ward. Mártsov was lying on his back, his sinewy arms bare to the elbow thrown back behind his head, and on his yellow face the expression of one who has clenched his teeth to prevent himself from screaming with pain. His sound leg with a stocking on showed from under the blanket and one could see the toes moving spasmodically.

'Well, how are you?' asked the sister, raising his slightly bald head with her slender delicate fingers (on one of which Volódya noticed a gold ring) and arranging his pillow.

'In pain of course!' he answered angrily. 'That'll do—the pillow's all right!' and the toes in the stocking moved still faster. 'How d'you do? What's your name?' . . . 'Excuse me,' he added, when Kozeltsóv had told him. 'Ah yes, I beg your pardon.'

One forgets everything here. Why, we lived together,' he remarked without any sign of pleasure, and looked inquiringly at Volódya.

'This is my brother, arrived to-day from Petersburg.'

'H'm! And I have got my discharge!' said the wounded man, frowning. 'Oh, how it hurts! If only it would be over quicker!'

He drew up his leg and, moving his toes still more rapidly, covered his face with his hands.

'He must be left alone,' said the sister in a whisper while tears filled her eyes. 'He is very ill.'

While still on the North Side the brothers had agreed to go to the Fifth Bastion together, but as they passed out of the Nicholas Battery it was as if they had agreed not to run unnecessary risks and for each to go his own way.

'But how will you find it, Volódya?' said the elder. 'Look here! Nikoláev shall take you to the Korábelnaya and I'll go on alone and come to you to-morrow.'

Nothing more was said at this last parting between the brothers.

XII

The thunder of the cannonade continued with unabated violence. Ekaterína Street, down which Volódya walked followed by the silent Nikoláev, was quiet and deserted. All he could distinguish in the dark was the broad street with its large white houses, many of them in ruins, and the stone pavement along which he was walking. Now and then he met soldiers and officers. As he was passing by the left side of the Admiralty Building, a bright light inside showed him the acacias planted along the side-walk of the streets with green stakes to support them and sickly, dusky leaves. He distinctly heard his own footsteps and those of Nikoláev, who followed him breathing heavily.

He was not thinking of anything: the pretty Sister of Mercy, Mártsov's foot with the toes moving in the stocking, the darkness, the bombs, and different images of death, floated dimly before his imagination. His whole young impressionable soul was weighed down and crushed by a sense of loneliness and of the general indifference shown to his fate in these dangerous surroundings. 'I shall be killed, I shall suffer, endure torments, and no one will shed a tear!' And all this instead of the heroic life abounding in energy and sympathy of which he had had such glorious dreams. The bombs whistled and burst nearer and nearer. Nikoláev sighed more and more often, but did not speak. As they were crossing the bridge that led to the Korábelnaya he saw a whistling something fall and disappear into the water near by, lighting the purple waves to a flaming red for a second and then come splashing up again.

'Just look! Not quenched!' said Nikoláev in a hoarse voice.

'No,' answered Volódya in an involuntarily high-pitched plaintive tone which surprised him.

They met wounded men carried on stretchers and more carts loaded with gabions. In the Korábelnaya they met a regiment, and men on horseback rode past. One of these was an officer followed by a Cossack. He was riding at a trot, but seeing Volódya he reined up his horse, looked in his face, turned away, and rode on, touching his horse with the whip.

'Alone, alone! No one cares whether I live or not,' thought the lad, and felt inclined to cry in real earnest.

Having gone up the hill past a high white wall he came into a street of small shattered houses, continually lit up by the bombs. A dishevelled, tipsy woman, coming out of a gate with a sailor, knocked up against Volódya.

'Because if he'sh an on'ble man,' she muttered—
'pardon y'r exshensh offisher!'

The poor lad's heart ached more and more. On the dark horizon the lightnings flashed oftener and oftener and the bombs whistled and exploded more and more frequently around them. Nikoláev sighed and suddenly began to speak in what seemed to Volódya a lifeless tone.

'There now, and we were in such a hurry to leave home! "We must go! We must go!" Fine place to hurry to! [Wise gentlemen when they are the least bit wounded lie up quietly in 'orspital. It's so nice, what better can you want?']'

'Well, but if my brother had recovered his health,' answered Volódya, hoping by conversation to disperse the dreadful feeling that had seized him.

'Health indeed! Where's his health, when he's quite ill? Even them as is really well had best lie in 'orspital these times. Not much pleasure to be got. All you get is a leg or an arm carried off. It's done before you know where you are! It's horrible enough even here in the town, but what's it like at the *baksions*! You say all the prayers you know when you're going there. See how the beastly thing twangs past you!' he added, listening to the buzzing of a flying fragment.

'Now,' he continued, 'I'm to show y'r honour the way. Our business is o' course to obey orders: what's ordered has to be done. But the trap's been left with some private or other, and the bundle's untied. . . . "Go, go!" but if something's lost, why Nikoláev answers for it!'

A few more steps brought them to a square. Nikoláev did not speak but kept sighing. Then he said suddenly:

'There, y'r honour, there's where your *antillary's* stationed. Ask the sentinel, he'll show you.'

A few steps farther on Volódya no longer heard

Nikoláev sighing behind him. He suddenly felt himself utterly and finally deserted. This sense of loneliness, face to face as it seemed to him with death, pressed like a heavy, cold stone on his heart. He stopped in the middle of the square, glanced round to see if anyone was looking, seized his head and thought with horror:

'O Lord, am I really a vile, miserable coward . . . when it's for my Fatherland, for the Tsar for whom I used to long to die? Yes! I am a miserable, wretched being!' And Volódya, filled with despair and disappointed at himself, asked the sentinel the way to the house of the commander of the battery and went where he was directed.

XIII

The commander of the battery lived in a small two-storied house with an entrance from the yard, which the sentinel pointed out. The faint light of a candle shone through a window patched up with paper. An orderly, who sat on the steps smoking his pipe, went in to inform the commander of the battery of Volódya's arrival and then showed him into the room. In the room, under a broken mirror between two windows, was a table littered with official papers; there were also several chairs and an iron bedstead with clean bedding, with a small rug beside it.

Just beside the door stood a handsome sergeant-major with large moustaches, wearing side-arms, and with a cross and an Hungarian medal¹ on his uniform. A staff-officer, a short man of about forty in a thin old cloak and with a swollen cheek tied round with a bandage, was pacing up and down the room.

'I have the honour to report myself, Ensign Kozeltsóv, *secundus*, ordered to join the Fifth Light

¹ That is, a medal granted for service in the suppression of the Hungarian rising in 1849, when Nicholas I helped Austria to suppress the insurgent Hungarians.

Artillery,' said Volódya on entering the room, repeating the sentence he had been taught.

The commander answered his greeting dryly and without shaking hands asked him to take a seat.

Volódya sat down shyly on a chair by the writing table, and began playing with a pair of scissors his hand happened to fall on. The commander, with his hands at his back and with drooping head, continued to pace the room in silence as if trying to remember something, only now and then glancing at the hand that was playing with the scissors.

The commander of the battery was rather stout, with a large bald patch on his head, thick moustaches hanging straight down over his mouth, and pleasant hazel eyes. His hands were plump, well-shaped, and clean, his small feet were much turned out and he trod with firmness in a way that indicated that he was not a diffident man.

'Yes,' he said, stopping opposite the sergeant-major, 'the ammunition horses must have an extra peck beginning from to-morrow. They are getting very thin. Don't you think so?'

'Well, we can manage an extra peck, your honour! Oats are a bit cheaper now,' answered the sergeant-major, standing at attention but moving his fingers, which evidently liked to aid his conversation by gestures. 'Then our forage-master, Frantchúk, sent me a note from the convoy yesterday that we must be sure, your Excellency, to buy axles there. They say they can be got cheap. Will you give the order?'

'Well, let him buy them—he has the money,' said the commander, and again began to pace the room. 'And where are your things?' he suddenly asked, stopping short in front of Volódya.

Poor Volódya was so oppressed by the thought that he was a coward, that he saw contempt for himself as a miserable craven in every look and every word. He felt as if the commander of the battery had already

discerned his secret, and was chaffing him. He was abashed, and replied that his things were at the Gráfskaya and that his brother had promised to send them on next day.

The commander did not stop to hear him out, but turning to the sergeant-major asked, 'Where could we put the ensign up?'

'The ensign, sir?' said the sergeant-major, making Volódya still more confused by casting a rapid glance at him which seemed to ask: 'What sort of an ensign is he?'

'Why, downstairs, your Excellency. We can put his honour up in the lieutenant-captain's room,' he continued after a moment's thought. 'The lieutenant-captain is at the *baksion* at present, so there's his bed empty.'

'Well then, if you don't mind for the present,' said the commander. 'I should think you are tired, and we'll make better arrangements to-morrow.'

Volódya rose and bowed.

'Would you like a glass of tea?' said the commander of the battery when Volódya had nearly reached the door. 'The samovar can be lit.'

Volódya bowed and went out. The colonel's orderly showed him downstairs into a bare, dirty room, where all sorts of rubbish was lying about and a man in a pink shirt and covered with a thick coat lay asleep on a bed without sheets or blankets. Volódya took him for a soldier.

'Peter Nikoláevich!' said the orderly, shaking the sleeper by the shoulder. 'The ensign will sleep here. . . . This is our cadet,' he added, turning to Volódya.

'Oh, please don't let me disturb you!' said Volódya, but the cadet, a tall, solid young man with a handsome but very stupid face, rose from the bed, threw the cloak over his shoulders, and evidently not yet quite awake, left the room saying: 'Never mind, I'll lie down in the yard.'

XIV

Left alone with his thoughts Volódyá's first feeling was one of fear at the disordered and cheerless state of his own soul. He longed to fall asleep, to forget all that surrounded him and especially himself. Putting out the candle, he took off his cloak and lay down on the bed, drawing the cloak over his head to shut out the darkness, of which he had been afraid from childhood. But suddenly the thought occurred to him that now, immediately, a bomb would crash through the roof and kill him, and he began listening. Just above his head he heard the steps of the commander of the battery.

'If it does come,' he thought, 'it will first kill those upstairs and then me—anyway not me alone.' This thought comforted him a little and he was about to fall asleep.

'But supposing that suddenly, to-night, Sevastopol is taken and the French break in here? What shall I defend myself with?' He rose and paced up and down the room. The fear of real danger drove away the fanciful fear of the darkness. A saddle and a samovar were the only hard things in the room.

'What a wretch I am—a coward, a despicable coward!' he thought again, and once more the oppressive feeling of contempt and even disgust for himself came over him. He lay down again and tried not to think. Then, under the influence of the unceasing noise which made the panes rattle in the one window of the room, the impressions of the day rose in his imagination, reminding him of danger. Now he seemed to see wounds and blood, then bombs and splinters flying into the room, then the pretty Sister of Mercy bandaging his wounds and crying over him as he lay dying, then his mother seeing him off in the little country town and praying fervently with tears in her eyes before the wonder-working icon—and

again sleep seemed impossible. But suddenly the thought of God Almighty, who can do anything and hears every prayer, came clearly into his mind. He knelt down, crossed himself, and folded his hands as he had been taught to do when a child. This attitude suddenly brought back to him an old, long-forgotten sense of comfort.

'If I must die, if I must cease to exist, then do it, Lord,' he thought, 'do it quickly, but if courage is needed and firmness, which I lack, grant them to me! Deliver me from the shame and disgrace which are more than I can bear, and teach me what I must do to fulfil Thy Will.'

The frightened, cramped, childish soul suddenly matured, brightened, and became aware of new, bright, and broad horizons. He thought and felt many things during the short time this state continued, but soon fell into a sweet untroubled slumber, amid the continued booming of the cannonade and rattle of the window-panes.

O Lord Almighty! Thou alone hast heard and knowest the simple yet burning and desperate prayers of ignorance, of confused repentance, prayers for bodily health and for spiritual enlightenment, that have risen to Thee from this dreadful place of death: from the general who, an instant after his mind has been absorbed by the Order of St. George upon his neck, feels with trepidation the nearness of Thy presence—to the private soldier prostrate on the bare floor of the Nicholas Battery, who prays for the future reward he dimly expects for all his sufferings.

XV

The elder Kozeltsóv happening to meet a soldier of his regiment in the street went with him straight to the Fifth Bastion.

'Keep to the wall, your honour!' said the soldier.

‘Why?’

‘It’s dangerous, your honour. There it is, flying over us!’ said the soldier, listening to the sound of a ball that whistled past and fell on the hard ground on the other side of the road.

[Without heeding the soldier’s words Kozeltsóv went boldly down the middle of the road.]

Here were still the same streets, the same or even more frequent firing, the same sounds, the same groans from the wounded one met on the way, and the same batteries, breastworks, and trenches, as when he was in Sevastopol in the spring; but somehow it all seemed more melancholy now and yet more vigorous. There were more holes in the houses, there were no lights in any of the windows except those of Kústchin’s house (a hospital), not a woman was to be seen, and the place no longer bore its former customary character and air of unconcern, but seemed burdened with heavy suspense and weariness.

But here is the last trench and the voice of a soldier of the P— regiment who has recognized his former company-commander, and there stands the third battalion, pressing against the wall in the darkness, now and then lit up for an instant by the firing, and sounds are heard, subdued talking and the clatter of muskets.

‘Where is the commander of the regiment?’ asked Kozeltsóv.

‘In the naval officers’ casemate, your honour,’ answers an obliging soldier. ‘Let me show you the way.’

Passing from trench to trench, the soldier led the way to a cutting in the trench. A sailor sat there smoking a pipe. Behind him was a door through a chink in which a light shone.

‘Can I go in?’

‘I’ll announce you at once,’ and the sailor went in at the door.

Two voices were heard talking inside.

'If Prussia remains neutral,' said one voice, 'Austria will too. . . .'

'What does Austria matter?' said the other, 'when the Slavonic lands. . . . Well, ask him in.'

Kozeltsóv had never been in this casemate and was struck by its elegance. It had a parquet floor and a screen in front of the door, two beds stood against the walls, and in a corner of the room there was a large icon—the Mother of God with an embossed gilt cover—with a pink lamp alight before it. A naval officer, fully dressed, was lying asleep on one of the beds. On the other, before a table on which stood two uncorked bottles of wine, sat the speakers—the new regimental commander and his adjutant. Though Kozeltsóv was far from being a coward and was not at all guilty of any offence either against the government or the regimental commander, still he felt abashed in the presence of his former comrade the colonel, so proudly did that colonel rise and give him his attention.

[And the adjutant who was sitting there also made Kozeltsóv feel abashed by his pose and look, that seemed to say: 'I am only a friend of your regimental commander's. You have not come to present yourself to me, and I can't and don't wish to demand any deference from you.']

'How strange!' thought Kozeltsóv as he looked at his commander, 'It's only seven weeks since he took the command, and yet all his surroundings—his dress, manner, and looks—already indicate the power a regimental commander has: [a power based not so much on his age, seniority, or military worth, as on his wealth as a regimental commander.] It isn't long since this same Batríshchev used to hobnob with us, wore one and the same dark cotton print shirt a whole week, ate rissoles and curd dumplings every day, never asking any one to share them—but look at him now! [A fine linen shirt showing from under his wide-

sleeved cloth coat, a ten-ruble cigar in his hand, a six-ruble bottle of claret on the table—all bought at incredible prices through the quartermaster at Simferópol—and] in his eyes that look of the cold pride of a wealthy aristocrat, which says: though as a regimental commander of the new school I am your comrade [don't forget that your pay is sixty rubles once in four months, while tens of thousands pass through my hands, and] believe me I know very well that you'd give half your life to be in my place!

'You have been under treatment a long time,' said the colonel, with a cold look at Kozeltsóv.

'I have been ill, Colonel. The wound is not thoroughly closed even now.'

'Then it's a pity you've come,' said the colonel, looking suspiciously at the officer's solid figure. 'But still, you are capable of taking duty?'

'Certainly sir, I am.'

'I am very glad to hear it. Then you'll take over from Ensign Záyitsev the Ninth Company that you had before. You will receive your orders at once.'

'Yes, sir.'

'Be so good as to send the regimental adjutant to me when you go.' The commander finished with a slight bow, thereby intimating that the audience was at an end.

On leaving the casemate Kozeltsóv muttered something to himself several times, and shrugged his shoulders as if he were hurt, or uncomfortable, or provoked—and provoked not with the colonel (he had no ground to be so) but with himself, and he felt dissatisfied with everything around him.

[Discipline and the subordination that goes with it, like every legalized relationship, is pleasant only when it rests on a mutual consciousness of its necessity, and of a superiority in experience, military worth, or simply on a moral superiority recognized by the inferior. But if the discipline is founded on arbitrary

or pecuniary considerations, as is often the case among us, it always turns into pretentiousness on the one side and into suppressed envy and irritation on the other, and instead of a useful influence uniting the mass into one whole it produces a quite opposite effect. A man who does not feel that he can inspire respect by his own worth, instinctively fears intimacy with his subordinates and tries by ostentation to keep criticism at a distance. The subordinates, seeing only this external side which is offensive to themselves, suppose (often unjustly) that there is nothing good behind it.]

XVI

Before going to join his fellow officers Kozeltsóv went to greet the men of his company and to see where it was stationed. The breastworks of gabions, the plan of the trenches, the cannon he passed, and even the fragments and bombs he stumbled over on the way, all lit up incessantly by the flashes of the firing, were quite familiar to him. All this had vividly impressed itself on his memory three months before, when he had spent two consecutive weeks at this bastion. Though there was much that was dreadful in the recollection, a certain charm of old times was mingled with it and he recognized all the familiar places and objects with pleasure, as if the fortnight spent there had been an agreeable one. His company was stationed against the wall of defence on the side towards the Sixth Bastion.

Kozeltsóv entered a long bomb-proof, quite open on the entrance side, where he was told he would find the Ninth Company. There was literally no room to set one's foot in the whole shelter: it was crowded with soldiers from the very entrance. At one side burned a crooked tallow candle which a soldier, lying on the ground, held over the book another was reading from, spelling out the words. Through the smoky atmo-

sphere of the place, in the dim light near the candle, heads were visible, raised eagerly to listen to the reader. The book was a primer, and on entering the bomb-proof Kozeltsóv heard the following:

'Pra-yer af-ter les-sons. We Thank Thee, O Cre-a-tor. . . .'

'Snuff the candle!' said a voice. 'It's a fine book.'

'God . . . is' . . . continued the reader.

When Kozeltsóv asked for the sergeant-major the reader stopped and the soldiers began moving, coughing and blowing their noses, as is usual after a restrained silence. The sergeant-major, buttoning his uniform, rose not far from the reader's group, and stepping over and onto the legs of those who could not get out of his way for lack of room, came up to the officer.

'Good evening, friend! Is this the whole of our company?'

'We wish your honour health. Welcome back, your honour!' answered the sergeant-major with a cheerful and friendly look at Kozeltsóv. 'How is your health getting on, your honour? Thank God you're better! We have missed you.'

It was easy to see that Kozeltsóv was liked by his company.

Far back in the bomb-proof voices were heard saying: 'Our old company-commander has come back!' 'Him that was wounded.' 'Kozeltsóv.' 'Michael Seménich,' and so on. Some men even moved nearer to him, and the drummer greeted him.

'How do you do, Obantchúk?' said Kozeltsóv. 'Still whole? Good evening, lads!' he added, raising his voice.

The answer, 'Wish your honour health!' resounded through the casemate.

'How are you getting on, lads?'

'Badly, your honour. The French are getting the better of us. They give it us hot from behind their trenchments, but don't come out into the open.'

'Perhaps it will be my luck to see them coming out into the open, lads,' said Kozeltsóv. 'It won't be the first time . . . you and I will give them a thrashing.'

'We'll do our best, your honour,' several voices replied.

'Yes, he's really brave!' said a voice.

'Awfully brave!' said the drummer to another soldier, not loud but so as to be heard, and as if justifying the commander's words to himself and proving that there was nothing boastful or unlikely in what he had said.

From the soldiers, Kozeltsóv went to join his fellow officers in the Defence Barracks.

XVII

In the large caserne there was a crowd of naval, artillery, and infantry officers. Some slept, others talked, sitting on a chest of some kind and on the carriage of a garrison gun, but the largest and noisiest group sat on two Cossack cloaks spread out on the floor beyond the arch, and were drinking porter and playing cards.

'Ah, Kozeltsóv! Kozeltsóv! . . . So you've come! That's good. . . . You're a brick. . . . How's your wound?' It was evident that he was liked here also, and that his return gave pleasure.

When he had shaken hands with those he knew, Kozeltsóv joined the noisy group of officers playing cards. With some of them he was acquainted. A thin, dark, handsome man, with a long thin nose and large moustaches which joined his whiskers, was keeping the bank and dealt the cards with thin white fingers on one of which he wore a large seal-ring with a crest. He dealt straight ahead and carelessly, being evidently excited about something, and only trying to appear at ease. On his right lay a grey-haired major leaning on his elbows who with affected coolness kept staking

half-rubles and paying at once. On his left squatted an officer with a red perspiring face, smiling unnaturally and joking. When his cards lost he kept fumbling with one hand in his empty trouser pocket. He was playing high, but evidently no longer for ready money, and it was this that upset the handsome dark man. A bald, thin, pale officer with a huge nose and mouth paced the room with a large bundle of paper money in his hand and continually staked *va-banque* for ready money and won. Kozeltsóv drank a glass of vodka and sat down with the players.

'Stake something, Michael Seménich!' said the banker. 'You must have brought back heaps of money.'

'Where should I get money? On the contrary, what I had I've spent in the town.'

'Never! . . . You've surely cleared someone out in Simferópol!'

'I've really very little,' said Kozeltsóv, but evidently not wishing to be believed he unbuttoned his uniform and took up an old pack of cards.

'Well, suppose I have a try! Who knows what the devil may do for one? Even a mosquito, you know, wins his battles sometimes. But I must have a drink to keep up my courage.'

And having drunk another glass of vodka and some porter he soon lost his last three rubles.

A hundred and fifty rubles were noted down against the perspiring little officer.

'No, I've no luck,' he said, carelessly preparing another card.

'I'll trouble you to hand up the money,' said the banker, ceasing to deal the cards for a moment and looking at him.

'Allow me to send it to-morrow,' replied the other, rising and fumbling with renewed vigour in his empty pocket.

The banker cleared his throat loudly, and angrily throwing the cards right and left finished the deal.

'But this won't do. I give up the bank. This won't do, Zakhár Ivánich,' he repeated. 'We were playing for cash, not on credit.'

'What? Don't you trust me? It's really too ridiculous!'

'Who am I to receive from?' muttered the major, who was quite drunk by this time and had won some eight rubles. 'I have paid up more than twenty rubles and when I win I get nothing.'

'What am I to pay with,' said the banker, 'when there's no money on the board?'

'That's not my business,' shouted the major, rising. 'I'm playing with you, *with honest people*, and not with him.'

The perspiring officer suddenly flared up:

'I shall pay to-morrow, I tell you. How dare you insult me?'

'I shall say what I please! *Honest people don't behave like that*. So there!' shouted the major.

'That's enough, Fëdor Fëdorich!' said everybody, trying to pacify him.

But let us hasten to drop the curtain on this scene. To-morrow or to-day, perhaps, each of these men will cheerfully and proudly go to face death, and die steadfastly and calmly; but the only relief in these inhuman conditions, horrible even to the coldest imagination and from which there is no hope of escape, is to forget and to suppress consciousness. Deep in each soul is a noble spark capable of making its possessor a hero, but it wearies of burning brightly—till a fateful moment comes when it will flash into flame and illumine great deeds.

XVIII

The bombardment continued with equal vigour the next day. At about eleven o'clock Volódya Kozeltsóv was sitting among the officers of his battery whom he was already beginning to get used to. He

was examining the new faces, observing, asking questions, and talking. The modest conversation, with some pretension to knowledge, of these artillery officers inspired him with respect and pleased him, and on the other hand, Volódya's bashful and innocent good looks inclined the officers in his favour. The senior of the battery, a captain, a short man with reddish hair standing up in a tuft above his forehead and brushed smooth on his temples, brought up in the old artillery traditions, a ladies' man with pretensions to scientific knowledge, questioned Volódya about what he knew of artillery and new inventions, joked in a friendly manner about his youth and his pretty face, and in general treated him like a son—and this pleased Volódya very much. Sub-lieutenant Dyádenko, a young officer who spoke with an Ukrainian accent and who wore a torn cloak and had dishevelled hair—though he talked loudly, snatched every opportunity to begin a hot dispute, and was abrupt in his movements—nevertheless seemed attractive to Volódya, for he could not help seeing that a very kind heart and much that was good lay beneath this rough exterior. Dyádenko kept offering to be of use to Volódya, and demonstrating to him that none of the guns in Sevastopol were placed according to rule.

The only one Volódya did not like was Lieutenant Tchernovítski with his arched eyebrows, though he was the most polite of them all, and wore a coat which was clean enough and neatly patched if not very new, and though he displayed a gold chain over his satin waistcoat. He kept asking what the Emperor and the Minister of War were doing, and told him with unnatural rapture of feats of valour performed in Sevastopol, regretted [the ill-advised arrangements on in his being made, and] that there were so few and in general displayed much [↑]gence, and noble feeling; but seemed unnatural and unplea-

particular that the other officers hardly spoke to Tchernovitski. Cadet Vlang, whom Volódyá had disturbed the night before, was also there. He did not speak, but sitting modestly in a corner laughed when there was anything funny, helped to recall anything that was forgotten, handed the vodka bottle, and made cigarettes for all the officers. Whether it was the modest, courteous manner of Volódyá, who treated him as an officer and did not order him about as if he were a boy, or whether Volódyá's attractive appearance charmed Vlángá (as the soldiers called him, giving a feminine form to his name), at any rate he did not take his large kindly eyes from the new officer, foresaw and anticipated his wants, and was all the time in a state of enamoured ecstasy which of course the officers noticed and made fun of.

Before dinner the lieutenant-captain was relieved from the bastion and joined them. Lieutenant-Captain Kraut was a fair-haired, handsome, vivacious officer with big sandy moustaches and whiskers. He spoke Russian excellently, but too accurately and elegantly for a Russian. In the service and in his life he was just the same as in his speech: he served admirably, was a first-rate comrade, most reliable in money matters, but as a man he seemed to lack something just because everything about him was so satisfactory. Like all Russo-Germans, in strange contradiction to the idealist German-Germans, he was *praktisch* in the extreme.

'Here he comes—our hero!' said the captain, as Kraut entered the room swinging his arms and jingling his spurs. 'What will you take, Friedrich Christiánich, tea or vodka?'

'I have already ordered some tea,' answered Kraut,

The bomb. 'I do not mind taking a drop of vodka the next day. My soul. . . . Very pleased to make Kozeltsóv was sitting hope you will favour me with whom he was already friendship,' he added, turning

to Volódya, who rose and bowed to him. 'Lieutenant-Captain Kraut. . . . The master-gunner at our bastion told me yesterday that you had arrived.'

'I am very grateful to you for your bed: I slept on it.'

'But were you comfortable? One of the legs is broken; no one has time to mend it in this state of siege, it has to be propped up.'

'Well, what luck have you had on duty?' asked Dyádenko.

'Oh, all right; only Skvortsóv was hit, and yesterday we had to mend a gun-carriage—the cheek was blown to shivers.'

He rose and began to walk up and down. It was evident that he was under the influence of that pleasant feeling men experience who have just left a post of danger.

'Well, Dmítri Gavrílich,' he said, shaking the captain by his knee, 'how are you getting on? What of your recommendation? Is it still silent?'

'There's no news as yet.'

'And there won't be any,' began Dyádenko. 'I told you so before.' •

'Why won't there be?'

'Because the report was not written properly.'

'Ah, you wrangler! You wrangler!' said Kraut, smiling merrily. 'A real obstinate Ukrainian! There now, just to spite you you'll get a lieutenancy.'

'No I shan't!'

'Vlang, get me my pipe and fill it,' said Kraut, turning to the cadet, who rose at once and readily ran for the pipe.

Kraut brightened them all up: he talked of the bombardment, asked what had been going on in his absence, and spoke to everybody.

XIX

'Well, have you established yourself satisfactorily among us?' Kraut asked Volódyá. 'Excuse me, what is your name and patronymic? You know that's our custom in the artillery. . . . Have you a horse?'

'No,' said Volódyá, 'I don't know what I'm to do. I was telling the captain . . . I have no horse nor any money until I get my forage-money and travelling expenses paid. I thought meanwhile of asking the commander of the battery to let me have a horse, but I'm afraid he'll refuse.'

'Apollón Sergéich . . .?' and Kraut made a sound with his lips expressive of strong doubt, and looking at the captain added, 'Hardly!'

'Well, if he does refuse there'll be no harm done,' said the captain. 'To tell you the truth, a horse is not much wanted here. Still, it's worth trying. I will ask him to-day.'

'How little you know him,' Dyádenko put in: 'he might refuse anything else, but not that. . . . Will you bet?'

'Oh, we know you can't help contradicting!'

'I contradict because I know. He's close in other matters, but he'll give a horse because he gains nothing by refusing.'

'Gains nothing when oats are eight rubles?' said Kraut. 'The gain is not having to keep an extra horse.'

'You ask for Skvoréts, Vladímir Seménich,' said Vlang, returning with Kraut's pipe. 'He's a capital horse.'

'Off which you fell into a ditch in Soróki, eh, Vlángá?' remarked the lieutenant-captain.

'What does it matter if oats are eight rubles, when in his estimates they figure at ten and a half?' That's

¹ Referring to the custom of charging the government more than the actual price of supplies. and thereby

where the gain comes in,' said Dyádenko, continuing to argue.

'Well naturally you can't expect him to keep nothing. When you're commander of a battery I daresay you won't let a man have a horse to ride into town.'

'When I'm commander of a battery my horses will get four measures each and I shan't make an income, no fear!'

'We shall see if we live . . . ' said the lieutenant-captain. 'You'll act in just the same way—and so will he,' pointing to Volódya.

'Why do you think that he too would wish to make a profit?' said Tchernovítski to Kraut. 'He may have private means, then why should he want to make a profit?'

'Oh no, I . . . excuse me, Captain,' said Volódya, blushing up to his ears, 'but I should think such a thing dishonourable.'

'Dear me! What a severe fellow he is!' said Kraut.

'No, I only mean that I think that if the money is not mine I ought not to take it.'

'But I'll tell you something, young man,' began the lieutenant-captain in a more serious tone. 'Do you know that if you are commanding a battery you have to conduct things properly, and that's enough. The commander of a battery doesn't interfere with the soldiers' supplies: that's always been the custom in the artillery. If you are a bad manager you will have no surplus. But you have to spend over and above what's in the estimates: for shoeing—that's one' (he bent down one finger), 'and for medicine—that's two' (and he bent down another finger), 'for office expenses—that's three: then for off-horses one has to pay up to five hundred rubles my dear fellow—that's four: you have to supply the soldiers with new making an income which was supposed to go for the benefit of the regiment, but part of which frequently remained unaccounted for.'

collars, spend a good bit on charcoal for the samovars, and keep open table for the officers. If you are in command of a battery you must live decently: you must have a carriage and a fur coat, and one thing and another. . . . It's quite plain!

'And above all,' interrupted the captain, who had been silent all the time, 'look here, Vladímir Seménich—imagine a man like myself say, serving for twenty years with a pay of first two hundred, then three hundred rubles a year. Can one refuse him a crust of bread in his old age, after all his service?'

'Ah, what's the good of talking,' began the lieutenant-captain again. 'Don't be in a hurry to judge, but live and serve.'

Volódya felt horribly confused and ashamed of what he had so thoughtlessly said. He muttered something, and then listened in silence while Dyádenko began very irritably to dispute and to argue the contrary of what had been said. The dispute was interrupted by the colonel's orderly who came to call them to dinner.

'Ask Apollón Sergéich to give us some wine to-day,' said Tchernovítski to the captain, buttoning his uniform. 'Why is he so stingy? If we get killed, it will all be wasted.'

'Ask him yourself.'

'Oh no, you're the senior officer. We must observe order in everything.'

XX

In the room where Volódya had presented himself to the colonel the evening before, the table had been moved away from the wall and covered with a dirty table-cloth. To-day the commander of the battery shook hands with him and asked him for the Petersburg news, and about his journey.

'Well, gentlemen, who takes vodka? Please help yourselves. . . . Ensigns don't take any,' he added with a smile.

Altogether he did not seem at all as stern as the night before; on the contrary he seemed a kind and hospitable host and an elder comrade among fellow officers. But in spite of it all, the officers from the old captain down to Ensign Dyádenko showed him great respect, if only by the way they addressed him, politely looking him straight in the eyes, and by the timid way they came up one by one to the side-table to drink their glass of vodka.

The dinner consisted of Polish cutlets with mustard, dumplings with butter that was not very fresh, and a large tureen of cabbage-soup in which floated pieces of fat beef with an enormous quantity of pepper and bay-leaves. There were no napkins, the spoons were of tin or wood, there were only two tumblers, and there was only water on the table, in a bottle with a broken neck; but the meal was not dull and the conversation never flagged. At first they talked about the battle of Inkerman, in which the battery had taken part, and each gave his own impressions of it and reasons for our reverse, but all were silent as soon as the commander spoke. Then the conversation naturally passed to the insufficient calibre of our field-guns, and to the subject of the new lighter guns, which gave Volódya an opportunity to show his knowledge of artillery. But the conversation never touched on the present terrible condition of Sevastopol: it was as if each man had thought so much on this subject that he did not wish to speak of it. Nor to Volódya's great surprise and regret was there any mention at all of the duties of the service he would have to perform. It was as if he had come to Sevastopol solely to discuss lighter guns and to dine with the commander of the battery. During dinner a bomb fell near the house they were in. The floor and walls shook as if from an earthquake, and the windows were darkened by the powder smoke.

'You didn't see that sort of thing in Petersburg,

I fancy, but here we get many such surprises,' said the commander of the battery. 'Vlang, go and see where it burst.'

Vlang went out to see, and reported that it had fallen in the square, and no more was said about the bomb.

Just before dinner ended, a little old man, the battery clerk, came into the room with three sealed envelopes and handed them to the commander: 'This one is very important: a Cossack has just brought it from the Chief of the Artillery.'

The officers all watched with eager impatience as the commander with practised fingers broke the seal and drew out the *very important* paper. 'What can it be?' each one asked himself. It might be an order to retire from Sevastopol to recuperate, or the whole battery might be ordered to the bastions.

'Again!' said the commander, angrily throwing the paper on the table.

'What is it, Apollón Sergéich?' asked the senior officer.

'They order an officer and men to some mortar-battery or other. . . . As it is I have only four officers, and not enough men for the gun•detachments,' grumbled the commander of the battery, 'and here they are taking more away. . . . However, gentlemen, some one will have to go,' he said after a short silence, 'the order is, to be at the outposts at seven. Send the sergeant-major to me. Well, who will go? Decide, gentlemen.'

'There's your man—he's not been anywhere yet,' said Tchernovítski, pointing to Volódya.

The commander of the battery did not answer.

'Yes, I should like to go,' said Volódya, feeling a cold sweat break out on his back and neck.

'No, why should he?' interrupted the captain. 'Of course no one would refuse, but one need not offer oneself either: if Apollón Sergéich leaves it to us, let us cast lots as we did last time.'

All agreed. Kraut cut up some paper, rolled up the pieces, and threw them into a cap. The captain joked and on this occasion even ventured to ask the colonel for some wine—to keep up their courage, as he said. Dyádenko sat looking grim, something made Volódya smile. Tchernovítski declared he was sure to draw it. Kraut was perfectly calm. Volódya was allowed to draw first. He took a roll of paper a bit longer than the others but then decided to change it, and taking a thinner and shorter one unrolled it and read, ‘Go.’

‘It’s I,’ he said with a sigh.

‘Well, God be with you! You’ll get your baptism of fire at once,’ said the commander, looking at the ensign’s perturbed face with a kindly smile. ‘But make haste and get ready, and to make it more cheerful for you, Vlang shall go with you as gun-sergeant.’

XXI

Vlang was extremely pleased with his appointment, ran off quickly to get ready, and when dressed came to help Volódya, trying to persuade him to take with him a bed, a fur coat, some back numbers of *Fatherland Records*, the coffee-pot with the spirit lamp, and other unnecessary things. The captain advised Volódya to read up in the Handbook (Bezák’s *Artillery Officer’s Handbook*) about firing mortars, and especially to copy out the tables in it. Volódya set to work at once and noticed to his surprise and joy that his fear of the danger and even greater fear that he was a coward, though it still troubled him a little, was far from what it had been the night before. This was partly the effect of daylight and activity, but was chiefly due to the fact that fear, like every strong feeling, cannot long continue with the same intensity. In short he had already had time to live through the worst of it. At about seven o’clock, just as the sun began to

disappear behind the Nicholas Barracks, the sergeant-major came and announced that the men were ready and waiting.

'I have given Vlánga the list, your honour will please receive it from him,' said he.

About twenty artillerymen, with side-arms only, stood behind the corner of the house. Volódya and the cadet walked up to them. 'Shall I make them a little speech or simply say "Good-day lads," or say nothing at all?' he thought. 'But why not say "Good-day lads", it is even right that I should,' and he cried boldly with his ringing voice, 'Good-day lads!' The soldiers answered gaily. The fresh young voice sounded pleasantly in the ears of each. Volódya went briskly in front of the soldiers, and though his heart beat as fast as if he had run full-speed for miles his step was light and his face cheerful. As they approached the Malákhov Redoubt and mounted the hill he noticed that Vlang, who kept close to him all the time and had seemed so brave before leaving the house, was continually dodging and stooping, as if all the bombs and cannon-balls, which whistled past very frequently here, were flying straight at him. Some of the soldiers did the same, and in general most of the faces expressed uneasiness if not exactly alarm. These circumstances emboldened Volódya and completely comforted him.

'So here am I too on the Malákhov mound, which I fancied a thousand times more terrible. And I get along without bowing to the balls, and am even much less frightened than the others. So I am no coward,' he thought with pleasure, and even with a certain self-complacent rapture.

This feeling however was quickly shaken by a sight he came upon in the twilight at the Kornílov Battery while looking for the commander of the bastion. Four sailors stood by the breastwork holding by its arms and legs the blood-stained corpse of a man without boots or coat and swinging it before heaving it over.

(On the second day of this bombardment it was found impossible in some parts to clear away the corpses from the bastions, and they were therefore thrown out into the ditch so as not to be in the way at the batteries.) Volódya felt stunned for a moment when he saw the body bump on the top of the breastwork and then roll down into the ditch, but luckily for him the commander of the bastion met him just then and gave him his orders and a guide to show him the way to the battery and to the bomb-proof assigned to his men. We will not speak of all the dangers and disenchantments our hero lived through that evening: how—instead of the firing he was used to on the Vólkov field amid conditions of perfect exactitude and order which he had expected to meet with here also—he found two damaged mortars, one with its muzzle battered in by a ball, the other standing on the splinters of its shattered platform; how he could not get workmen before the morning to mend the platform; how not a single charge was of the weight specified in the Handbook; how two of the men under him were wounded, and how he was twenty times within a hair's-breadth of death. Fortunately a gigantic gunner, a seaman who had served with the mortars since the commencement of the siege, had been appointed to assist Volódya, and convinced him of the possibility of using the mortars. By the light of a lantern this gunner showed him all over the battery as he might have shown him over his own kitchen-garden, and undertook to have everything right by the morning. The bomb-proof to which his guide led him was an oblong hole dug in the rocky ground, twenty-five cubic yards in size and covered with oak beams two and a half feet thick. He and all his soldiers installed themselves in it.

As soon as he discovered the little door, not three feet high, Vlang rushed in headlong before anyone else, and at the risk of breaking his limbs against the

stone bottom squeezed into the farthest corner and remained there. Volódya, when all the soldiers had settled on the ground along the walls and some had lit their pipes, made up his own bed in a corner, lit a candle, and after lighting a cigarette, lay down.

The reports of continuous firing could be heard overhead but not very distinctly, except from one cannon which stood quite close and shook the bomb-proof with its thunder. In the bomb-proof all was quiet, except when one or other of the soldiers, still rather shy in the presence of the new officer, spoke, asking a neighbour to move a little or to give him a light for his pipe, when a rat scratched somewhere among the stones, or when Vlang, who had not yet recovered and was still looking wildly around him, heaved a deep sigh.

Volódya, on his bed in this quiet corner crammed with people and lighted by a solitary candle, experienced a sensation of cosiness such as he had felt as a child when, playing hide-and-seek, he used to creep into a cupboard or under his mother's skirt and sit listening in breathless silence, afraid of the dark yet conscious of enjoyment. It felt rather uncanny, yet his spirits were high.

XXII

After ten minutes or so the soldiers grew bolder and began to talk. The more important ones—two non-commissioned officers: an old grey-haired one with every possible medal and cross except the St. George, and a young one, a Cantonist,¹ who was smoking cigarettes he had rolled himself—settled nearest to the light and to the officer's bed. The drummer had as usual assumed the duty of waiting upon the officer. The bombardiers and those who had medals came

¹ The Cantonists, under serfdom, which still prevailed at the time of the Crimean War, were the sons of soldiers, condemned by law and heredity to be soldiers also.

next, and farther off, in the shadow nearer the entrance, sat the humbler folk. It was these last who started a conversation, caused by the noise a man made who came tumbling hurriedly into the bomb-proof.

'Hullo, old fellow! Why don't you stay outside? Don't the lasses play merrily enough out there?' said a voice.

'They're playing such tunes as we never hear in our village,' laughingly replied the man who had just run in.

'Ah, Vásin don't like bombs—that he don't!' said some one in the aristocratic corner.

'If it was necessary, that would be a different matter,' replied Vásin slowly, and when he spoke all the others were silent. 'On the 24th we were at least firing, but why grumble at me now? The authorities won't thank the likes of us for getting killed uselessly.'

At these words everyone laughed.

'There's Mélnikov—he's out there now, I fancy,' said someone.

'Go and send Mélnikov in here,' said the old sergeant, 'or else he really will get killed uselessly.'

'Who is Mélnikov?' asked Volódya.

'Oh, he's a poor silly soldier of ours, your honour. He's just afraid of nothing, and he's walking about outside now. You should have a look at him, he's just like a bear.'

'He knows a charm,' came Vásin's long-drawn accents from the other corner.

Mélnikov entered the bomb-proof. He was stout (an extremely rare thing among soldiers), red-haired and red-faced, with an enormous bulging forehead and prominent pale-blue eyes.

'Aren't you afraid of the bombs?' asked Volódya.

'What's there to be afraid of in them bombs?' answered Mélnikov, wriggling and scratching himself. 'They won't kill me with a bomb, I know.'

'So you'd like to live here?'

"Course I should. It's jolly here,' he said and burst out laughing.

'Oh, then they should take you for a sortie! Shall I speak to the general about it?' said Volódya, though he did not know a single general in the place.

'Like, indeed! 'Course I should!' And Mélnikov hid behind the others.

'Let's have a game of "noses" lads! Who has the cards?' his voice was heard to say hurriedly.

And soon the game had started in the far corner: laughter could be heard, and noses being smacked and trumps declared. The drummer having heated the samovar for him, Volódya drank some tea, treated the non-commissioned officers to some, and, wishing to gain popularity, joked and talked with them and felt very pleased at the respect paid him. The soldiers, seeing that the gentleman gave himself no airs, became talkative too. One of them explained that the siege of Sevastopol would not last much longer, because a reliable fellow in the fleet had told him that Constantine, the Tsar's brother, was coming with the 'merican fleet to help us, and also that there would soon be an agreement not to fire for a fortnight, but to have a rest, and that if anyone did fire, he'd have to pay a fine of seventy-five kopéks for each shot. Vásin, who was a small man with whiskers and large kind eyes, as Volódya had already noticed, related, first amid general silence and then amid roars of laughter, how he had gone home on leave and at first everyone was glad to see him, but then his father had begun sending him to work while the forester-lieutenant sent a horse and trap to fetch his wife! All this amused Volódya very much. He not only felt no fear or annoyance because of the overcrowding and bad air in the bomb-proof, but on the contrary felt exceedingly bright and contented.

Many of the soldiers were already snoring. Vlang

had also stretched himself out on the floor, and the old sergeant having spread his cloak on the ground was crossing himself and muttering prayers before going to sleep, when Volódyá felt moved to go out of the bomb-proof and see what was happening outside.

'Draw in your legs!' the soldiers called to one another as soon as he rose, and the legs were drawn in to make room for him.

Vlang, who had seemed to be asleep, suddenly raised his head and seized Volódyá by the skirts of his cloak.

'Don't go! Don't go—how can you?' he began in a tearfully persuasive voice. 'You don't know what it's like. Cannon-balls are falling all the time out there. It's better in here.'

But in spite of Vlang's entreaties Volódyá made his way out of the bomb-proof and sat down on the threshold, where Mélnikov was already sitting making his feet comfortable.

The air was pure and fresh, especially after that of the bomb-proof, and the night was clear and calm. Mingling with the booming of the cannon could be heard the rumbling of the wheels of carts bringing gabions, and voices of men at work in the powder-vault. High overhead stretched the starry sky, across which the fiery trails of the bombs ran incessantly. On the left was another bomb-proof, through the three-foot opening of which the legs and backs of the sailors who lived there could be seen and their voices heard. In front was the roof of the powder-vault, past which flitted the figures of stooping men, while on the top of it, under the bullets and bombs that kept flying past, was a tall figure in a black cloak with its hands in its pockets, treading down the earth the others carried up in sacks. Many a bomb flew past and exploded very near the vault. The soldiers who were carrying the earth stooped and stepped aside,

but the black figure continued calmly to stamp the earth down with its feet and remained on the spot in the same position.

'Who is that black fellow there?' said Volódya to Mélnikov.

'Can't say. I'll go and see.'

'No, don't. There's no need.'

But Mélnikov rose without heeding him, approached the black figure, and for a long time stood beside it just as indifferent and immovable.

'That's the powder-master, your honour!' he said when he returned. 'The vault has been knocked in by a bomb, so the infantry are carrying earth there.'

Now and then a bomb seemed to fly straight at the door of the bomb-proof. Then Volódya pressed behind the corner, but soon crept out again looking up to see if another was coming that way. Though Vlang from inside the bomb-proof again and again entreated him to come in, Volódya sat at the threshold for about three hours, finding a kind of pleasure in tempting fate and watching the flying bombs. By the end of the evening he knew how many guns were firing, from which positions, and where their shots fell.

XXIII

The next morning, 27 August, Volódya, fresh and vigorous after ten hours' sleep, stepped across the threshold of the bomb-proof. Vlang too came out, but at the first sound of a bullet rushed wildly back to the entrance, pushing his way through the crowd with his head amid the general laughter of the soldiers, most of whom had also come out into the fresh air.

Vlang, the old sergeant, and a few others only came out into the trench at rare intervals, but the rest could not be kept inside: they all crept out of the stuffy bomb-proof into the fresh morning air and in

spite of the firing, which continued as violently as on the day before, settled themselves—some by the threshold of the bomb-proof and some under the breastwork. Mélnikov had been strolling about from battery to battery since early dawn, looking calmly upwards.

Near the threshold sat two old soldiers and one young curly-haired one, a Jew transferred to the battery from an infantry regiment. This latter had picked up one of the bullets that were lying about, and after flattening it out on a stone with the fragment of a bomb, was now carving out a cross like the Order of St. George. The others sat talking and watching his work. The cross was really turning out very well.

‘I say,’ said one of them, ‘if we stay here much longer we shall all have served our time and get discharged when there’s peace.’

‘You’re right. Why I had only four years left to serve, and I’ve been five months already in Sevastopol.’

‘That won’t be reckoned specially towards our discharge, it seems,’ said another.

At that moment a cannon-ball flew over the heads of the speakers and fell a couple of feet from Mélnikov, who was coming towards them through the trench.

‘That one nearly killed Mélnikov,’ said one of them.

‘It won’t kill me,’ said Mélnikov.

‘Then I present you with this cross for your courage,’ said the young soldier, giving him the cross he had made.

‘. . . No, my lad, a month’s service here counts as a year for everything—that was said in the proclamation,’ continued one of the soldiers.

‘You may say what you like, but when we have peace we’re sure to have an Imperial review at Warsaw, and then if we don’t all get our discharge we shall be put on the permanent reserve.’

Just then a shrieking, glancing rifle-bullet flew just over the speakers’ heads and struck a stone.

'Look out, or you'll be getting your discharge in full before to-night,' said one of the soldiers.

They all laughed.

And not only before night, but before two hours had passed, two of them had got their discharge in full and five more were wounded, but the rest went on joking just the same.

By the morning the two mortars had really been put into such a condition that they could be fired, and at ten o'clock Volódyá called out his company and marched with it to the battery, in accordance with the order he had received from the commander of the bastion.

Not a trace of the fear noticeable the day before remained among the men as soon as they were actively engaged. Only Vlang could not master himself, but hid and ducked in the same old way, and Vásin lost some of his composure, fidgetted, and kept dodging. Volódyá was in ecstasies, the thought of danger never entered his head. Joy at fulfilling his duty, at finding that not only was he no coward but that he was even quite brave, the sense of commanding and being in the presence of twenty men who were he knew watching him with curiosity, made him quite valiant. He was even vain of his courage and showed off before the soldiers, climbing out onto the banquette and unfastening his cloak on purpose to be more conspicuous. The commander of the bastion making the round of his 'household' as he expressed it, accustomed as he had grown during the last eight months to courage of all kinds, could not help admiring this handsome lad, with his coat unbuttoned showing a red shirt fitting close to his delicate white neck, who with flushed face and shining eyes clapped his hands, gave the order, 'One—two!' in ringing tones, and ran gaily onto the breastwork to see where his bombs were falling. At half-past

eleven the firing slackened on both sides, and at twelve o'clock precisely the storming of the Malákhov Redoubt, and of the Second, Third (the Redan), and Fifth Bastions, began.

XXIV

On the North Side of the Roadstead, towards mid-day, two sailors were standing on the telegraph hill between Inkerman and the Northern entrenchment: one of them, an officer, was looking at Sevastopol through the telescope fixed there. Another officer with a Cossack had just ridden up to the signal-post.

The sun shone brightly high above the Roadstead, and with its warm bright light played on the stationary vessels, the flapping sails, and the rowing boats. A light wind scarcely swayed the withering leaves of the oak-scrub near the telegraph post, filled the sails of the boats, and ruffled the waves. Sevastopol, still the same, with its unfinished church, its column, its quay, its boulevard showing green on the hill, and the elegant building of its library; with its little azure creeks bristling with masts, the picturesque arches of its aqueducts, and with clouds of blue powder-smoke now and then lit up by red flashes from the guns—this same beautiful, festive, proud Sevastopol, surrounded on one side by yellow smoking hills and on the other by the bright blue sea playing in the sunlight—could still be seen on the opposite side of the Roadstead. Above the rim of the sea, along which spread a streak of black smoke from a steamer, drifted long white clouds that portended rain. Along the whole line of entrenchments, especially on the hills to the left, compressed puffs of thick white smoke continually appeared several at a time, accompanied by flashes that sometimes gleamed like lightning even in the noontide light; and these puffs grew larger and assumed various shapes, rising and seeming darker against the sky.

They started now here now there from the hills, from the enemy's batteries, from the town, and high up in the sky. The noise of the reports never ceased, and mingling with one another they shook the air.

Towards noon the cloudlets of smoke showed less and less often and the air was less shaken by the booming.

'There now, the Second Bastion doesn't reply at all!' said the mounted hussar officer. 'It's absolutely knocked to bits. It's terrible!'

'Yes, and the Malákhov hardly fires one shot for three of theirs,' replied the man who was looking through the telescope. 'It makes me mad that ours are silent. They are firing straight into the Kornílov Battery and it doesn't reply at all.'

'But look here, I told you they always stop bombarding at noon. And it's the same to-day. We'd better go to lunch . . . they'll be waiting for us as it is. . . . There's nothing to look at now.'

'Wait a bit! Don't bother me!' said the man in possession of the telescope, looking eagerly at Sevastopol.

'What is it? What?'

'A movement in the trenches—dense columns advancing.'

'Yes, one can see it with the naked eye,' said the sailor. 'They are advancing in columns. We must give the alarm.'

'Look! Look! They have left the trenches.'

And one could really see with the naked eye what seemed like dark spots coming down the hill, across the ravine from the French batteries towards our bastions. In front of these spots, dark streaks could already be seen near our lines. From our bastions white cloudlets of firing burst out at different points as if crossing one another. The wind brought a sound of small-arm firing, like rain pelting against window-panes. The dark streaks were moving nearer and nearer right amid the smoke. The sounds of firing

grew louder and louder and merged into a prolonged rumbling peal. The smoke, rising more and more often, spread rapidly along the lines and at last merged into one light-purple cloud curling and uncurling, amid which here and there flashes just flickered and dark dots appeared: all the separate sounds blended into one thundering crash.

‘An assault!’ said the officer, growing pale and letting the sailor have the telescope.

Cossacks galloped down the road, officers on horse-back passed by, and the commander-in-chief in a carriage accompanied by his suite. On every face there was an expression of painful agitation and expectancy.

‘They can’t have taken it!’ cried the mounted officer.

‘By God, a standard! Look! Look!’ said the officer, panting and moving away from the telescope—‘A French standard on the Malákhov!’

‘Impossible!’

XXV

The elder Kozeltsóv, who had found time that night to win back his money and to lose it all again, including the gold pieces sewn in his cuff, was lying towards morning in a heavy, unhealthy, and deep sleep in the Defence Barracks of the Fifth Bastion, when a desperate cry arose, repeated by many voices—

‘The alarm!’

‘Why are you sleeping, Michael Seménich? We are attacked!’ shouted someone.

‘It must be a hoax,’ he said, opening his eyes incredulously.

Then he saw an officer running from one corner of the barracks to the other without any apparent reason and with such a pale face that he realized it all. The thought that they might take him for a coward who did not wish to be with his company at a critical moment upset him terribly, and he rushed full speed

to join it. The artillery firing had ceased, but the clatter of musketry was at its height. The bullets did not whistle as single ones do but came in swarms like a flock of autumn birds flying overhead.

The whole place where his battalion had been stationed the day before was hidden in smoke, and enemy shouts and exclamations could be heard. As he went he met crowds of wounded and unwounded soldiers. Having run another thirty paces he saw his own company pressed to the wall.

'The Schwartz Redoubt is taken!' said a young officer, whose teeth were chattering. 'All is lost!'

'Nonsense!' said Kozeltsóv angrily, and [wishing to rouse himself by a gesture] he drew his blunt little iron sword and cried:

'Forward, lads! Hurrah!'

His voice sounded loud and clear and roused Kozeltsóv himself. He ran forward along the traverse, and about fifty soldiers ran shouting after him. From the traverse he ran out into the open ground. The bullets fell just like hailstones. Two hit him, but where, and what they had done—bruised him or wounded him—he had no time to determine. Before him through the smoke he could already see blue coats and red trousers, and hear shouts that were not Russian. One Frenchman stood on the breastwork waving his cap and shouting something. Kozeltsóv felt sure he would be killed, and this increased his courage. He ran on and on. Several soldiers outran him, others appeared from somewhere else and also ran. The blue uniforms were always at the same distance from him, running back to their trenches, but there were dead and wounded on the ground under his feet. When he had run to the outer ditch, everything became blurred in Kozeltsóv's eyes and he felt a pain in his chest.

Half an hour later he was lying on a stretcher near the Nicholas Barracks and knew that he was wounded,

but felt hardly any pain. He only wished for something cool to drink, and to lie more comfortably.

A plump little doctor with large black whiskers came up to him and unbuttoned his cloak. Kozeltsóv looked over his chin to see the doctor's face and what he was doing to his wound, but he still felt no pain. The doctor covered the wound with the shirt, wiped his fingers on the skirt of his cloak and silently, without looking at the wounded man, passed on to another patient. Kozeltsóv unconsciously watched what was going on around him and, remembering what had happened at the Fifth Bastion with exceedingly joyful self-satisfaction, felt that he had performed his duty well—that for the first time in the whole of his service he had acted as well as it was possible to act, and that he had nothing to reproach himself with. The doctor, bandaging another man, pointed to Kozeltsóv and said something to a priest with a large red beard, who stood near by with a cross.

'Am I dying?' asked Kozeltsóv when the priest approached him.

The priest did not reply, but said a prayer and held a cross to the wounded man's lips.

Death did not frighten Kozeltsóv. He took the cross with his weak hands, pressed it to his lips, and began to weep.

'Were the French driven back?' he asked the priest firmly.

'The victory is ours at all points,' answered the latter to console the wounded man, concealing from him the fact that a French standard was already waving from the Malákhov Redoubt.

'Thank God!' exclaimed the dying man, not feeling the tears that ran down his cheeks, [and experiencing inexpressible delight at the consciousness of having performed an heroic deed.]

The thought of his brother flashed through his brain. 'God grant him as good a fate!' thought he.

XXVI

But a different fate awaited Volódya. He was listening to a tale Vásin was telling when he heard the cry 'The French are coming!' The blood suddenly rushed to his heart and he felt his cheeks grow cold and pale. He remained immovable for a moment, but glancing round saw the soldiers fastening their uniforms and crawling out one after the other fairly coolly. One of them—Mélnikov probably—even joked, saying, 'Take them some bread and salt.'¹

Volódya, and Vlang who followed him like a shadow, climbed out of the bomb-proof and ran to the battery. There was no artillery firing at all from either side. The coolness of the soldiers did less to rouse Volódya than the pitiful cowardice of the cadet. 'Can I possibly be like him?' he thought, and ran gaily to the breastwork where his mortars stood. He could plainly see the French running straight towards him across the open ground, and crowds of them moving in the nearer trenches, their bayonets glittering in the sunshine. One short, broad-shouldered fellow in a Zouave uniform was running in front, sword in hand, jumping across the pits.

'Fire case-shot!' cried Volódya, running back from the banquette, but the soldiers had already arranged matters without him and the metallic ring of the discharged case-shot whistled over his head first from one mortar and then from the other. 'One—Two!' ordered Volódya, running the distance between the two mortars and quite forgetting the danger. From one side and near at hand was heard the clatter of the musketry of our supports, and excited cries.

Suddenly a wild cry of despair arose on the left. 'They're behind us! Behind us!' repeated several voices. Volódya looked round. About twenty French-

¹ It is a Russian custom to offer bread and salt to new arrivals.

men appeared behind him. One of them, a handsome man with a black beard, was in front of the rest, but having run up to within ten paces of the battery he stopped, fired point-blank at Volódya, and then again started running towards him. For a moment Volódya stood petrified, unable to believe his eyes. When he recovered and glanced round he saw French uniforms on the breastwork before him; two Frenchmen were even spiking a cannon some ten paces from him. No one was near but Mélnikov, who had fallen at his side killed by a bullet, and Vlang, who had seized a linstock and was rushing forward with a furious look on his face, rolling his eyes and shouting.

'Follow me, Vladímir Seménich! . . . Follow me!' he cried in a desperate voice, brandishing his linstock at the Frenchmen who had appeared from behind. The furious figure of the cadet perplexed them. Vlang hit the front one on the head, the others involuntarily hesitated, and he ran to the trench where our infantry lay firing at the French, continually looking back and shouting desperately, 'Come with me, Vladímir Seménich! Why are you stopping? Run!' Having jumped in, he climbed out again to see what his adored ensign was doing. Something in a cloak lay prostrate where Volódya had stood, and that whole place was occupied by Frenchmen firing at our men.

XXVII

Vlang found his battery at the second line of defence. Of the twenty soldiers belonging to the mortar battery only eight were left.

Towards nine in the evening Vlang crossed over with the battery to the North Side on a steamer crowded with soldiers, cannon, horses, and wounded men. There was no firing anywhere. The stars shone as brightly in the sky as they had done the night before, but the sea was rocked by a strong wind. On

the First and Second Bastions flames kept bursting up along the ground, explosions rent the air and lit up strange dark objects and the stones flying in the air around them. Something was burning near the docks and the red glare was reflected on the water. The bridge thronged with people was illuminated by a fire at the Nicholas Battery. A large flame seemed to stand above the water on the distant little headland of the Alexander Battery, lighting up from below the clouds of smoke that hung above it, and quiet, bold lights gleamed over the sea, as they had done yesterday, from the distant enemy fleet, and the fresh wind raised waves in the Roadstead. By the glaring light of the conflagration one could see the masts of our sinking ships as they slowly descended deeper and deeper into the water. There was no talking on board, only words of command given by the captain, the snorting and stamping of the horses on the vessel, and the moaning of the wounded, could be heard above the steam and the regular swish of the parting waters. Vlang, who had had nothing to eat all day, took a piece of bread from his pocket and began munching it, but suddenly remembering Volódya he began to sob so loud that the soldiers near him heard it.

‘Look! He’s eating bread and yet he’s sobbing, is our Vlánga!’ said Vásin.

‘That’s queer!’ said another.

‘Look! Our barrack’s been set on fire too,’ he continued with a sigh. ‘What a lot of the likes of us perished there; and now the Frenchmen have got it for nothing.’

‘At all events we have got off alive, thank God!’ said Vásin.

‘All the same, it’s a shame.’

‘Where’s the shame? D’you think they’ll get a chance of amusing themselves there? See if ours don’t retake it. No matter how many of the likes of us are

lost; if the Emperor gives the word, as sure as there's a God we'll take it back. You don't suppose we'll leave it like that? No fear! There, take the bare walls. . . . The 'trenchments are all blown up. . . . Yes, I daresay. . . . *He's* stuck his flag on the mound, but he's not shoved himself into the town. . . . You wait a bit! The real reckoning will come yet—only wait a bit!' he concluded, admonishing the French.

'Of course it will!' said another with conviction.

Along the whole line of the Sevastopol bastions—which for so many months had been seething with such extraordinary life and energy, for so many months had seen heroes relieved by death as they fell one after another, and for so many months had aroused the fear, the hatred, and at last the admiration of the enemy—no one was now to be seen: all was dead, ghastly, terrible. But it was not silent: destruction was still going on. Everywhere on the ground, blasted and strewn around by fresh explosions, lay shattered gun-carriages crushing the corpses of foes and Russians alike, cast-iron cannons thrown with terrific force into holes and half-buried in the earth and silenced for ever, bombs, cannon-balls and more dead bodies; then holes and splintered beams of what had been bomb-proofs, and again silent corpses in grey or blue uniforms. All this still shuddered again and again, and was lit up by the lurid flames of the explosions that continued to shake the air.

The enemy saw that something incomprehensible was happening in awe-inspiring Sevastopol. The explosions and the deathly stillness on the bastions made them shudder, but under the influence of the strong and firm resistance of that day they did not yet dare to believe that their unflinching foe had disappeared, and they awaited the end of the gloomy night silently, motionless and anxious.

The Sevastopol army, surging and spreading like the sea on a rough dark night, its whole mass anxiously

palpitating, slowly swayed through the thick darkness by the bridge over the Roadstead and onto the North Side, away from the place where it was leaving so many brave comrades, from the place saturated with its blood, the place it had held for eleven months against a far stronger foe, but which it was now ordered to abandon without a struggle.

The first effect this command had on every Russian was one of oppressive bewilderment. The next feeling was a fear of pursuit. The men felt helpless as soon as they had left the places where they were accustomed to fight, and crowded anxiously together in the darkness at the entrance to the bridge which was rocked by the strong wind. With bayonets clashing, regiments, vehicles, and militia crowded together and pressed forward to the bay. While mounted officers pushed through with orders, the inhabitants wept, orderlies carrying forbidden luggage entreated, and artillery with rattling wheels hurried to get away. Notwithstanding the diversion resulting from their various and bustling occupations, the instinct of self-preservation and the desire to get away as quickly as possible from this dreadful place of death was present in the soul of each. It was present in the mortally wounded soldier who lay among the five hundred other wounded men on the pavement of the Pávlov Quay praying to God for death; in the militiaman pushing with all his might among the dense crowd to make way for a general who was riding past; in the general who conducted the crossing, firmly restraining the impetuosity of the soldiers; in the sailor who, having got among a moving battalion, was squeezed by the swaying crowd till he could scarcely breathe; in the wounded officer whom four soldiers had been carrying on a stretcher, but stopped by the throng had put down on the ground near the Nicholas Battery; in the artilleryman who having served with the same gun for sixteen years was now, in obedience

to an officer's order quite incomprehensible to him, with the help of his comrades pushing that gun down the steep bank into the Roadstead, and in the sailors of the fleet who, having just scuttled their ships, were briskly rowing away from them in the long-boats. On reaching the North Side and leaving the bridge almost every man took off his cap and crossed himself. But behind this feeling of self-preservation there was another, a deeper feeling, sad and gnawing, akin to remorse, shame, and anger. Almost every soldier looking back at the abandoned town from the North Side, sighed with inexpressible bitterness in his heart and made a menacing gesture towards the enemy.

MEETING A MOSCOW ACQUAIN-
TANCE IN THE DETACHMENT

From *Prince Nekhlyúdob's Caucasian Memoirs*

LIST OF CHARACTERS IN
MEETING A MOSCOW ACQUAINTANCE

GUSKÓV, nicknamed Guskantini, condemned for punishment to serve as a private.

PAUL DMÍTRICH, Adjutant.

NICHOLAS IVÁNICH S—, Lieutenant-Captain; a good-natured officer.

NIKÍTA, an Orderly.

MAKATYÚK, another Orderly.

ALEXÉY IVÁNICH, a Captain.

ANDRÉEV, a soldier.

MEETING A MOSCOW ACQUAINTANCE IN THE DETACHMENT

WE were out with a detachment. The work in hand was almost done, the cutting through the forest was nearly finished, and we were expecting every day to receive orders from head-quarters to retire to the fort.

Our division of the battery guns was placed on the slope of a steep mountain range which stretched down to the rapid little mountain river Mechik, and we had to command the plain in front. Occasionally, especially towards evening, on this picturesque plain beyond the range of our guns, groups of peaceable mountaineers on horseback appeared here and there, curious to see the Russian camp. The evening was clear, quiet, and fresh, as December evenings usually are in the Caucasus. The sun was setting behind the steep spur of the mountain range to the left, and threw rosy beams on the tents scattered over the mountain side, on the moving groups of soldiers, and on our two guns, standing as if with outstretched necks, heavy and motionless, on the earthwork battery close by. The infantry picket, stationed on a knoll to our left, was sharply outlined against the clear light of the sunset, with its piles of arms, the figure of its sentry, its group of soldiers, and the smoke of its dying camp-fire. To right and to left, half-way down the hill, white tents gleamed on the trodden black earth, and beyond the tents loomed the bare black trunks of the plane forest, where axes continually rang, fires crackled, and trees fell crashing down. On all sides the pale bluish smoke rose in columns towards the frosty blue sky. Beyond the tents, and on the low ground by the stream, Cossacks, dragoons, and artillery drivers trailed along, returning from watering their stamping and snorting

horses. It was beginning to freeze; all sounds were heard with unusual distinctness, and one could see far into the plain through the clear rarefied air. The groups of natives, no longer exciting the curiosity of our men, rode quietly over the light-yellow stubble of the maize-fields. Here and there through the trees could be seen the tall posts of Tartar cemeteries, and the smoke of their *avuls*.

Our tent was pitched near the guns, on a dry and elevated spot whence the view was specially extensive. By the tent, close to the battery, we had cleared a space for the games of Gorodki¹ or Choushki. Here the attentive soldiers had erected for us rustic seats and a small table. Because of all these conveniences our comrades the artillery officers, and some of the infantry, liked to assemble at our battery, and called this place 'The Club'.

It was a beautiful evening, the best players had come, and we were playing Gorodki. I, Ensign D., and Lieutenant O. lost two games running, and to the general amusement and laughter of the onlooking officers, and of soldiers and orderlies who were watching us from their tents, we twice carried the winners pick-a-back from one end of the ground to the other. Specially amusing was the position of the enormous, fat Lieutenant-Captain S., who puffing and smiling good-humouredly, with his feet trailing on the ground, rode on the back of the small and puny Lieutenant O. But it was growing late. The orderlies brought three tumblers of tea without any saucers for the whole six of us, and having finished our game we came to the rustic seats. Near them stood a short, bandy-

¹ Gorodki is a game in which short, thick sticks are arranged in certain figures within squares. Each side has its own square, and each player in turn throws a stick to try to clear out the enemy's square. The side wins which first accomplishes this with the six figures in which the sticks are successively arranged.

legged man whom we did not know, dressed in a sheepskin coat and with a large, white, long-woolled sheepskin cap on his head. As soon as we approached him he hesitatingly took off and put on his cap several times and repeatedly seemed on the point of coming up to us, but then stopped again. But probably having decided that he could no longer remain unnoticed, this stranger again raised his cap, and passing round us approached Lieutenant-Captain S.

‘Ah, Guskantini! Well, what is it, old chap?’ said S., still continuing to smile good-humouredly after his ride.

Guskantini, as S. called him, put on his cap at once, and made as if to put his hands in the pockets of his sheepskin coat; but on the side turned to me I could see it had no pocket, so that his little red hand remained in an awkward position. I tried to make up my mind what this man could be (a cadet or an officer reduced to the ranks?), and without noticing that my attention (the attention of an unknown officer) confused him, I looked intently at his clothing and general appearance. He seemed to be about thirty. His small round grey eyes seemed to look sleepily and yet anxiously from under the dirty white wool which hung over his face from his shaggy cap. The thick irregular nose between the sunken cheeks accentuated his sickly, unnatural emaciation. His lips, only slightly covered by thin light-coloured moustaches, were continually in motion, as if trying to put on now one, now another expression. But all these expressions seemed unfinished; his face still kept its one predominant expression of mingled fear and hurry. His thin scraggy neck was enveloped in a green woollen scarf, partly hidden under his sheepskin coat. The coat was worn bare and was short; it was trimmed with dog’s fur round the collar and at the false pockets. He had greyish check trousers on, and soldier’s boots with short upblacked tops.

'Please don't trouble,' said I, when he again raised his cap, looking timidly at me.

He bowed with a grateful look, put on his cap, and taking from his trouser pocket a dirty calico tobacco-pouch tied with a cord, began to make a cigarette.

It was not long since I myself had been a cadet; an old cadet who could no longer act the good-humoured attentive younger comrade to the officers, and a cadet without means. Understanding, therefore, all the wretchedness of such a position for a proud man no longer young, I felt for all who were in that state, and tried to discern their characters and the degree and direction of their mental capacities, in order to be able to judge the extent of their moral suffering. This cadet, or degraded officer, judging by his restless look and the purposely varying expression of his face, seemed to be far from stupid, but very self-conscious, and therefore very pitiable.

Lieutenant-Captain S. proposed another game of Gorodki, the losers, besides carrying the winners pick-a-back, to stand a couple of bottles of claret, with rum, sugar, cinnamon, and cloves, to make mulled wine, which was very popular in our detachment that winter because of the cold weather. Guskantini, as S. again called him, was also asked to join, but before beginning, evidently wavering between the pleasure this invitation gave him and fear of some kind, he led Lieutenant-Captain S. aside and whispered something into his ear. The good-natured Lieutenant-Captain slapped him on the stomach with the palm of his big fat hand, and answered aloud, 'Never mind, old chap, I'll give you credit!'

When the game was finished, and when, the side of the lower-grade stranger having won, he should have ridden on one of our officers, Ensign D., the latter blushed, turned aside to the seats, and offered the stranger some cigarettes by way of ransom. When the mulled wine had been ordered, and one could hear

Nikita's bustling arrangements in the orderlies' tent and how he sent a messenger for cinnamon and cloves, and could then see his back, first here and then there, bulging the dirty sides of the tent,—we, the seven of us, sat down by the little table, drinking tea in turns out of the three tumblers and looking out over the plain, which began to veil itself in evening twilight, while we talked and laughed over the different incidents of the game. The stranger in the sheepskin coat took no part in the conversation, persistently refused the tea I repeatedly offered him, and, sitting on the ground Tartar-fashion, made cigarettes one after the other out of tobacco-dust, and smoked them evidently not so much for his own pleasure as to give himself an appearance of being occupied. When it was mentioned that a retreat was expected next day, and that perhaps we should have a fight, he rose to his knees and, addressing only Lieutenant-Captain S., said that he had just been at home with the Adjutant and had himself written out the order to move next day. We were all silent while he spoke, and, though he was evidently abashed, we made him repeat this communication—highly interesting to us. He repeated what he had said, adding, however, that at the time the order arrived, he was *with*, and *sat with*, the Adjutant, *with whom he lived*.

'Mind, if you are not telling us a lie, old chap, I must be off to my company to give some orders for to-morrow,' said Lieutenant-Captain S.

'No. . . . Why should? . . . Is it likely? . . . It is certain . . . ' began the stranger, but stopped suddenly, having evidently determined to feel hurt, frowned unnaturally and, muttering something between his teeth, again began making cigarettes. But the dregs of tobacco-dust that he could extract from his pouch being insufficient, he asked S. to *favour him with the loan of a cigarette*. We long continued among ourselves that monotonous military chatter familiar to all who

have been on campaign. We complained, ever in the same terms, of the tediousness and duration of the expedition; discussed our commanders in the same old way; and, just as often before, we praised one comrade, pitied another, were astonished that So-and-so won so much, and that So-and-so lost so much at cards, and so on and so on.

'Our Adjutant has got himself into a mess, and no mistake,' said Lieutenant-Captain S. 'He always used to win when he was on the staff—whoever he sat down with he'd pluck clean—but now these last two months he does nothing but lose. He has not hit it off in this detachment! I should think he's lost 1,000 rubles in money, and things for another 500: the carpet he won of Mukhin, Nikitin's pistols, the gold watch from Sada's that Vorontsov gave him—have all gone.'

'Serves him right,' said Lieutenant O.; 'he gulled everybody, it was impossible to play with him.'

'He gulled everybody, and now he himself is gravelled,' and Lieutenant-Captain S. laughed good-naturedly. 'Guskov, here, lives with him—the Adjutant nearly lost him one day at cards! Really! Am I not right, old chap?' he said, turning to Guskov.

Guskov laughed. It was a pitifully sickly laugh which completely changed the expression of his face. This change suggested to me the idea that I had seen and known the man before, besides, Guskov, his real name, was familiar to me. But how and when I had seen him I was quite unable to remember.

'Yes,' said Guskov, who kept raising his hand to his moustaches and letting it sink again without touching them, 'Paul Dmitrich has been very unlucky this campaign: such a *veine de malheur*,'¹ he added, in carefully spoken but good French, and I again thought I had met, and even often met, him somewhere. 'I know Paul Dmitrich well; he has great confidence in

¹ Run of ill luck.

me,' continued he; 'we are old acquaintances—I mean he is fond of me,' he added, evidently alarmed at his own too bold assertion of being an old acquaintance of the Adjutant. 'Paul Dmitrich plays remarkably well, but now it is incomprehensible what has happened to him; he seems quite lost—*la chance a tourné*,'¹ he said, addressing himself chiefly to me.

At first we had listened to Guskov with condescending attention, but as soon as he uttered this second French phrase we all involuntarily turned away from him.

'I have played hundreds of times with him,' said Lieutenant O., 'and you won't deny that it is *strange*' (he put a special emphasis on the word 'strange'), 'remarkably strange, that I never once won even a twenty-kopek piece of him. How is it I win when playing with others?'

'Paul Dmitrich plays admirably: I have long known him,' said I. I had really known the Adjutant for some years; had more than once seen him playing for stakes high in proportion to the officers' means; and had admired his handsome, rather stern, and always imperturbably[•] calm face, his slow Ukrainian pronunciation, his beautiful things, his horses, his leisurely Ukrainian disposition, and especially his ability to play with self-control—systematically and pleasantly. I confess that more than once when looking at his plump white hands with a diamond ring on the first finger as he beat my cards one after the other, I was enraged with this ring, with the white hands, with the whole person of the Adjutant, and evil thoughts concerning him rose in my mind. But on thinking matters over in cool blood I became convinced that he was simply a more sagacious player than all those with whom he happened to play. I was confirmed in this by the fact that when listening to his general reflections on gaming—how, having been lucky starting

¹ The luck has turned.

with a small stake, one should follow up one's luck; how in certain cases one ought to stop playing; that the first rule was to play for *ready-money*, &c., &c.—it was clear that he always won simply because he was cleverer and more self-possessed than the rest of us. And it now appeared that this self-possessed, strong player had, in the detachment, lost completely, not only money, but other belongings as well—which among officers indicates the lowest depth of loss.

'He was always devilish lucky when playing against me,' continued Lieutenant O.; 'I have sworn never to play with him again.'

'What a queer fellow you are, old man!' said S., winking at me so that his whole head moved while he addressed O.; 'you have lost some 300 rubles to him—lost it, haven't you?'

'More!' said the Lieutenant crossly.

'And now you've suddenly come to your senses; but it's too late, old chap! Everyone else has long known him to be the sharper of our regiment,' said S., hardly able to refrain from laughter and highly delighted at his invention.

'Here's Guskov himself—he prepares the cards for him. That is why they are friends, old chap! . . . ' And Lieutenant-Captain S. laughed good-humouredly so that he shook all over and spilt some of the mulled wine he held in his hand. A faint tinge of colour seemed to rise on Guskov's thin, yellow face; he opened his mouth repeatedly, lifted his hands to his moustache and let them drop again to the places where his pockets should have been, several times began to rise but sat down again, and at last said in an unnatural voice, turning to S.:

'This is not a joke, Nicholas Ivanich, you are saying *such things*! And in the presence of people who don't know me and who see me in a common sheepskin coat . . . because . . . ' His voice failed him, and again the little red hands with their dirty nails moved from

his coat to his face, now smoothing his moustaches or hair, now touching his nose, rubbing his eye, or unnecessarily scratching his cheek.

'What's the good of talking; everyone knows it, old chap!' continued S., really enjoying his joke and not in the least noticing Guskov's excitement. Guskov again muttered something, and leaning his right elbow on his left knee in a most unnatural position, looked at S. and tried to smile contemptuously.

'Yes,' thought I, watching that smile, 'I have not only seen him before, but have spoken with him somewhere.'

'We must have met somewhere before,' I said to him when, under the influence of the general silence, S.'s laughter began to subside.

Guskov's mobile face suddenly brightened, and his eyes, taking for the first time a sincerely pleased expression, turned to me.

'Certainly; I knew you at once!' he began in French. 'In '48 I had the pleasure of meeting you rather often in Moscow at my sister's—the Ivashins.'

I apologized for not having recognized him in his present costume. He rose, approached me, and with his moist hand irresolutely and feebly pressed mine. Instead of looking at me, whom he professed to be so glad to see, he looked round in an unpleasantly boastful kind of way at the other officers. Either because he had been recognized by me who had seen him some years before in a drawing-room in a dress-coat, or because that recollection suddenly raised him in his own esteem, his face and even his movements, as it seemed to me, changed completely. They now expressed a lively intellect, childish self-satisfaction at the consciousness of that intellect, and a kind of contemptuous indifference. So that I admit, notwithstanding the pitiful position he was in, my old acquaintance no longer inspired me with sympathy, but with an almost inimical feeling.

I vividly recalled our first meeting. In 1848, during my stay in Moscow, I often visited Ivashin. We had grown up together and were old friends. His wife was a pleasant hostess and what is considered an amiable woman, but I never liked her. The winter I visited them she often spoke with ill-concealed pride of her brother, who had lately finished his studies and was, it seemed, among the best-educated and most popular young men in the best Petersburg society. Knowing by reputation Guskov's father, who was very rich and held an important position, and knowing his sister's leanings, I was prejudiced before I met Guskov. One evening, having come to see Ivashin, I found there a very pleasant-looking young man, not tall, in a black swallow-tail coat and white waistcoat and tie; but the host forgot to introduce us to one another. The young man, evidently prepared to go to a ball, stood hat in hand in front of Ivashin, hotly but politely arguing about a common acquaintance of ours who had recently distinguished himself in the Hungarian campaign. He was maintaining that this acquaintance of ours was not at all a hero or a man born for war, as was said of him, but merely a clever and well-educated man. I remember that I took part against Guskov in the dispute and went to an extreme, even undertaking to show that intelligence and education were always in inverse ratio to bravery; and I remember how Guskov pleasantly and cleverly argued that bravery is an inevitable result of intelligence and of a certain degree of development, with which view (considering myself to be intelligent and well educated) I could not help secretly agreeing. I remember also how, at the end of our conversation, Ivashin's wife introduced us to one another and how her brother, with a condescending smile, gave me his little hand on which he had not quite finished drawing a kid glove, and pressed mine in the same feeble and irresolute manner as he did now. Though

prejudiced against Guskov, I could not then help doing him the justice of agreeing with his sister that he really was an intelligent and pleasant young man who ought to succeed in society. He was exceedingly neat, elegantly dressed, fresh looking, and had self-confidently modest manners and a very youthful, almost childlike, appearance which made one unconsciously forgive the expression of self-satisfaction and of a desire to mitigate the degree of his superiority over you, which his intelligent face, and especially his smile, always showed. It was reported that he had great success among the Moscow ladies that winter. Meeting him at his sister's I could only infer the amount of truth in these reports from the expression of pleasure and satisfaction he always wore, and from the indiscreet stories he sometimes told. We met some half-dozen times and talked a good deal, or rather he talked a good deal and I listened. He usually spoke French, in a very correct, fluent, and ornamental style, and knew how to interrupt others in conversation politely and gently. In general he treated me and everyone rather condescendingly; and as always happens to me with people who are firmly convinced that I ought to be treated with condescension and whom I do not know well, I felt that he was quite right in so doing.

Now, when he sat down beside me and gave me his hand of his own accord, I vividly recalled his former supercilious expression, and thought that he, as one of inferior rank, was making a rather unfair use of the advantage of his position by questioning me, an officer, in an off-hand manner, as to what I had been doing all this time and how I came to be here. Though I answered in Russian every time, he always began again in French, in which it was noticeable that he no longer expressed himself as easily as formerly. About himself he only told me in passing that after that unfortunate and stupid affair of his (I did not

know what this affair was, and he did not tell me) he had been three months under arrest, and was afterwards sent to the Caucasus to the N—— Regiment and had now served three years as a private.

'You would not believe,' said he, in French, 'what I have suffered at the hands of the officer sets! It was lucky I formerly knew this Adjutant we have just been talking about: he is really a good fellow,' he remarked condescendingly. 'I am living with him, and it is after all some mitigation. *Oui, mon cher, les jours se suivent, mais ne se ressemblent pas,*'¹ he added, but suddenly became confused, blushed, and rose from his seat, having noticed that the Adjutant we had been talking about was approaching us.

'It is such a consolation to meet a man like you,' whispered Guskov as he was leaving my side; 'there is very very much I should like to talk over with you.'

I told him I should be very glad, though I confess that in reality Guskov inspired me with an unsympathetic, painful kind of pity.

I foresaw that I should feel uncomfortable when alone with him, but I wanted to hear a good many things from him, especially how it was that, while his father was so wealthy, he was poor, as his clothes and habits showed.

The Adjutant greeted us all except Guskov, and sat down beside me where the latter had been.

Paul Dmitrich, whom I had always known as a calm, deliberate, strong gambler and a moneyed man, was now very different from what he had been in the flourishing days of his card-playing. He seemed to be in a hurry, kept looking round at everybody, and before five minutes were over he, who always used to be reluctant to play, now proposed to Lieutenant O. that the latter should start a 'bank'.

Lieutenant O. declined, under pretext of having

¹ Yes, my dear fellow, the days follow, but do not resemble one another.

duties to attend to; his real reason being that, knowing how little money and how few things Paul Dmitrich still possessed, he considered it unwise to risk his three hundred rubles against the hundred or less he might win.

'Is it true, Paul Dmitrich,' said the Lieutenant, evidently wishing to avoid a repetition of the request, 'that we are to leave here to-morrow?'

'I don't know,' replied Paul Dmitrich, 'but the orders are, to be ready! But really we'd better have a game: I would stake my Kabardá¹ horse.'

'No, to-day . . .'

'The grey one. Come what may! Or else, if you like, we'll play for money. Well?'

'Oh, but I—I would readily—you must not think—' began Lieutenant O., answering his own doubts, 'but you know, we may have an attack or a march before us to-morrow and I want to have a good sleep.'

The Adjutant rose, and putting his hands in his pockets began pacing up and down. His face assumed the usual cold and somewhat proud expression which I liked in him.

'Won't you have a glass of mulled wine?' I asked.

'I don't mind if I do,' he said, coming towards me.

But Guskov hurriedly took the tumbler out of my hand and carried it to the Adjutant, trying at the same time not to look at him. But he did not notice one of the cords with which the tent was fastened, stumbled over it, and letting the tumbler drop, fell on his hands.

'What a muff!' said the Adjutant, who had already stretched out his hand for the tumbler. Everyone burst out laughing, including Guskov, who was rubbing his bony knee which he could not have hurt in falling.

¹ Kabardá is a district in the Terek Territory of the Caucasus, and Kabardá horses are famous for their powers of endurance.

'That's the way the bear served the hermit,' continued the Adjutant. 'It's the way he serves me every day! He has wrenched out all the tent-pegs stumbling over them.' Guskov, paying no heed to him, apologized, looking at me with a scarcely perceptible, sad smile, which seemed to say that I alone could understand him. He was very pitiable, but the Adjutant, his protector, seemed for some reason to be angry with his lodger and would not let him alone.

'Oh yes, he's a sharp boy, turn him which way you will.'

'But who does not stumble over those pegs, Paul Dmitrich?' said Guskov; 'you yourself stumbled the day before yesterday.'

'I, old fellow, am not in the ranks; smartness is not expected of me.'

'He may drag his feet,' added Lieutenant-Captain S., 'but a private must skip. . . .'

'What curious jokes! . . . ' said Guskov, almost in a whisper, with eyes cast down. The Adjutant evidently did not feel indifferent to his lodger, he watched keenly every word he uttered.

'He'll have to be sent to the ambuscades again,' he said, addressing S., and winking towards the degraded one.

'Well, then, tears will flow again,' said S., laughing.

Guskov no longer looked at me, but pretended to be getting tobacco from the pouch which had long been empty.

'Get ready to go to the outposts, old chap,' said S., laughing, 'the scouts have reported that the camp will be attacked to-night, so reliable lads will have to be told off.'

Guskov smiled undecidedly, as if preparing to say something, and cast several imploring looks at S.

'Well, you know I have been before, and I shall go again if I am sent,' muttered he.

'Yes, and you will be sent!'

'Well, and I'll go. What of that?'

'Yes, just as you did at Argun—ran away from the ambuscade and threw away your musket,' said the Adjutant, and turning away from him began telling us about the order for the next day.

It was true that the enemy was expected to fire at the camp in the night, and a movement of some sort was to take place next day. After talking for a while on various subjects of general interest, the Adjutant, as if he had suddenly chanced to recollect it, proposed to Lieutenant O. to have a little game. The Lieutenant quite unexpectedly accepted and they went with S. and the Ensign to the Adjutant's tent, where a green folding-table and cards were to be found. The Captain, who was commander of our division, went to his tent to sleep, the other gentlemen also went away and Guskov and I were left alone.

I had not been mistaken; I really felt uncomfortable alone with him, and I could not help rising and pacing up and down the battery. Guskov walked silently by my side, turning round hurriedly and nervously so as neither to lag behind nor pass before me.

'I am not in your way?' he said, in a meek, sad voice. As far as I could judge in the darkness his face seemed deeply thoughtful and melancholy.

'Not at all,' I answered, but as he did not begin to speak, and I did not know what to say to him, we walked a good while in silence.

The twilight was now quite replaced by the darkness of night, but over the black outlines of the mountains the sheet-lightnings so common there in the evening flashed brightly. Above our heads tiny stars twinkled in the pale-blue frosty sky, and the red flames of smoking camp-fires glared all around: the tents near us seemed grey, and the embankment of our battery a gloomy black. From the fire nearest to us, round which our orderlies sat warming themselves and talking now, a gleam now and then fell on the

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brass of our heavy guns and made visible the figure of the sentry, as, with his cloak thrown over his shoulders, he walked with measured steps along the embankment.

'You can't think what a relief it is to me to talk to a man like you!' said Guskov, though he had not yet spoken to me about anything. 'Only a man who has been in my position can understand it.'

I did not know what to answer, and again we were silent, though it was evident that he wished to speak out and I wished to hear him.

'For what were you. . . . What was the cause of your misfortune?' I asked at last, unable to think of any better way to start the conversation.

'Did you not hear about the unfortunate affair with Metenin?'

'Oh yes; a duel, I think. I heard some reference to it,' I answered. 'You see, I have been some time in the Caucasus.'

'No, not a duel, but that stupid and terrible affair! I will tell you all about it if you have not heard it. It was the same year that you and I used to meet at my sister's. I was then living in P^étersburg. But first I must tell you that I then had what is called *une position dans le monde*,¹ and a tolerably lucrative if not brilliant one. *Mon père me donnait 10,000 par an*.² In '49 I was promised a place in the embassy at Turin; an uncle on my mother's side had influence and was always ready to give me a lift. It's now a thing of the past. *J'étais reçu dans la meilleure société de P^étersbourg: je pouvais prétendre*³ to make a good match. I had learnt—as we all learn at school; so that I possessed no special education. It is true I read a good deal afterwards, *mais j'avais surtout*, you know, *ce*

¹ A position in the world.

² My father allowed me 10,000 rubles a year.

³ I was received in the best society of Petersburg: I could aspire . . .

jargon du monde;¹ and, whatever the cause, I was considered one of the leading young men in Petersburg. What raised me most in the general estimation, *c'est cette liaison avec Mme D——*,² which was much talked of in Petersburg. But I was awfully young at the time and set little value on these advantages. I was simply young and foolish. What more did I need? At that time in Petersburg that fellow Metenin had a reputation. . . . And Guskov continued in this manner to tell me the story of his misfortune, which, being quite uninteresting, I will here omit.

'Two months,' continued he, 'I was under arrest and quite alone. I don't know what did not pass through my mind in that time; but, do you know, when it was all over, when it seemed as if every link with the past was severed, it became easier for me. *Mon père, vous en avez entendu parler*³ surely: he is a man with an iron will and firm convictions; *il m'a déshérité*⁴ and ceased all intercourse with me. According to his convictions it was the proper thing to do, and I do not blame him at all; *il a été conséquent*.⁵ And I also did not take a step to induce him to change his mind. My sister was abroad. Mme D—— was the only one who wrote to me when letters were allowed, and she offered me help; but you will understand that I could not accept it, so that I had none of those trifles which somewhat mitigate such a position, you know—no books, no linen, no private food, nothing. Many, very many thoughts passed through my brain at that time and I began to look at everything with other eyes; for instance, all that noise and gossip about me in Petersburg society no longer interested or flattered me in the least; it all seemed ridiculous. I felt I was myself to blame; I had been careless and young and

¹ But in particular I spoke the society jargon.

² Was that liaison with Mme D——.

³ My father; you will have heard him spoken of.

⁴ He disinherited me.

⁵ He has been consistent.

had spoilt my career, and my only thought was how to retrieve it. And I felt I had strength and energy enough to do it. After my arrest was over, I was, as I told you, sent to the Caucasus to the N— Regiment.

‘I thought that here, in the Caucasus,’ he continued, growing more and more animated, ‘*la vie de camp*,¹ the simple, honest men with whom I should be in contact, the war, the dangers—all this would just suit my frame of mind and I thought I should begin life anew. *On me verra au feu*²—people would like me, would respect me not for my name only; then I should receive a cross, become a non-commissioned officer and at last be pardoned and should return, *et, vous savez, avec ce prestige du malheur*!’³ But *quel désenchantement*!’⁴ You can’t think how I was mistaken! . . . You know the officer set of our regiment?’ He paused for some time, probably expecting me to say that I knew how bad the society of officers here is; but I did not reply to him. I was disgusted that—on account, no doubt, of my knowing French—he should suppose that I ought to despise the officer set, which on the contrary I, having lived long in the Caucasus, had fully learnt to appreciate, and which I esteemed a thousand times more than the society Mr. Guskov had left. I wished to tell him so, but his position restrained me.

‘In the N— Regiment the officer set is a thousand times worse than here,’ he continued—‘*J’espère que c’est beaucoup dire*,⁵—so that you can’t imagine what it is like! Not to mention the cadets and the soldiers—it was just awful! At first I was well received, that’s perfectly true, but afterwards, when they saw I couldn’t help despising them—when in those scarcely

¹ Camp life.

² I should be seen under fire.

³ You know, with the prestige that misfortune gives.

⁴ (But) what a disenchantment!

⁵ I hope that is saying a good deal.

noticeable everyday relations, you know, they saw that I was a totally different sort of man standing on a far higher level than they—they were exasperated with me and began to retaliate by subjecting me to all kinds of petty indignities. *Ce que j'ai eu à souffrir, vous ne vous faites pas une idée.*¹ Then, being obliged to associate with the cadets; and above all, *avec les petits moyens que j'avais, je manquais de tout,*² I had only what my sister sent me. A proof of what I have suffered is that I, with my character, *avec ma fierté, j'ai écrit à mon père,*³ imploring him to send me something, however little. . . . I can understand how after five years of such a life one may become like our cashiered officer Dromov, who drinks with the soldiers and writes notes to all the officers begging them to *lend* him three rubles, and signs himself, "*Tout à vous, Dromov.*" One needs a character like mine in order not to sink quite into the mire in this terrible position.' He then walked silently by my side for a long time. '*Avez-vous un papiros?*'⁴ he said at last. 'Yes, . . . where had I got to? Oh yes, I could not stand it. I don't mean physically, for although it was bad enough and I suffered from cold and hunger and lived like a soldier, yet the officers still had a sort of regard for me. I still had a kind of *prestige* in their eyes. They did not send me to do sentry duty or drill. I could not have borne that. But morally I suffered terribly, and above all I could see no escape from this position. I wrote to my uncle imploring him to transfer me to this regiment, which is at least on active duty, and I thought that here Paul Dmitrich, *qui est le fils de l'intendant de mon père,*⁵ would be of use to me. My uncle did this much for me, and I was transferred. After that other regiment this

¹ You can have no idea of what I had to suffer.

² With the small means I had, I lacked everything.

³ With my pride, I wrote to my father.

⁴ I have you a cigarette?

⁵ Who is the son of my father's steward.

seemed an assembly of courtiers. And Paul Dmitrich was here; he knew who I was, and I was capitally received—at my uncle's request. . . . Guskov, *vous savez*. But I noticed that these people, without education or culture, cannot respect a man nor show him respect when he is not surrounded by an aureole of wealth and rank. I noticed how, little by little, when they saw that I was poor, their behaviour to me became more and more careless, and at last almost contemptuous. It is dreadful, but it is perfectly true.

'Here I have been in action, have fought, *on m'a vu au feu*,'¹ he continued, 'but when will it end? Never, I think! And my strength and energy are beginning to fail. And then I had imagined *la guerre, la vie de camp*,² but it turns out to be quite different from what I expected: dressed in a sheepskin, in soldier's boots, unwashed, you are sent to the outposts and lie all night in a ditch with some Antonov or other who has been sent into the army for drunkenness, and at any moment you may be shot from behind a bush—you or Antonov, all the same. . . . That is not courage! It is horrible. *C'est affreux, ça tue*.'³

'Well, but you may be made a non-commissioned officer for this expedition, and next year may become an ensign,' I said.

'Yes, possibly. I was promised it, but that would be another two years and it is very doubtful. And does any one realize what two such years mean? Just imagine the life with this Paul Dmitrich: gambling, rough jokes, dissipation. . . . You want to speak out about something that has risen in your soul, but you are not understood or you are laughed at. They talk to you not to communicate their thoughts, but to make a fool of you if possible. And it's all so vulgar, coarse, horrid; and all the time you feel you are a private—they always make you feel that. That is why you

¹ I have been seen under fire.

² War, camp-life.

³ It is dreadful, it is killing.

can't imagine what a pleasure it is to talk *à cœur ouvert*¹ to a man like you!

I could not imagine what sort of a man I was supposed to be and therefore did not know how to reply to him.

'Will you have supper?' at this moment asked Nikita, who had approached unseen in the darkness, and who, I noticed, was not pleased at the presence of my visitor: 'there's nothing but dumplings and a little beef left.'

'And has the captain had his supper?'

'He's asleep long ago,' said Nikita, crossly.

On my telling him to bring us something to eat and some vodka, he muttered discontentedly and went slowly to his tent. However, after grumbling there a bit, he brought us the cellaret, on which he placed a candle (round which he first tied a piece of paper to keep the wind off), a saucepan, a pot of mustard, a tin cup with a handle, and a bottle of vodka bitters. Having arranged all this, Nikita stood some time near us and watched with evident disapproval while Guskov and I drank some of the spirit. By the dim light of the candle shining through the paper the only things one could see amid the surrounding darkness were the sealskin with which the cellaret was covered, the supper standing on it, and Guskov's face, his sheepskin coat, and the little red hands with which he took the dumplings out of the saucepan. All around was black, and only by looking intently could one discern the black battery, the equally black figure of the sentry visible over the breastwork, the campfires around, and the reddish stars above. Guskov smiled just perceptibly in a sad and bashful way as if it were awkward for him to look me in the eyes after his confession. He drank another cup of vodka and ate greedily, scraping out the saucepan.

'Yes, it must at any rate be some relief to you,'

¹ Quite frankly.

I remarked, in order to say something, 'to be acquainted with the Adjutant; I have heard he is a very decent fellow.'

'Yes,' he answered, 'he is a kind-hearted man, but he can't help being what he is; he can't be a man, with his education one can't expect it,' and he suddenly seemed to blush. 'You noticed his coarse jokes to-day about the ambuscades.' And Guskov, in spite of my repeated efforts to turn the conversation, began to justify himself to me and to demonstrate that he did not run away from the ambuscades, and that he was not a coward as the Adjutant and Captain S. wished to imply.

'As I told you,' he said, wiping his hands on his sheepskin, 'people of that kind can't be considerate to a man who is a private and who has but little money: that is beyond them. And these last five months, during which it has somehow happened that I have received nothing from my sister, I have noticed how they have changed towards me. This sheepskin I bought of a soldier, and which is so worn that there is no warmth in it' (here he showed me the bare skirt of the coat), 'does not inspire him with sympathy or respect for my misfortunes, but only contempt which he is unable to conceal. However great my need, as, for instance, at the present time, when I have nothing to eat except the soldiers' buckwheat, and nothing to wear,' he continued, seemingly abashed, and pouring out for himself yet another cup of vodka, 'he does not think of offering to lend me any money, although he knows that I should certainly repay him, but he waits that I, in my position, should ask him for it. You understand what it would mean for me to have to go to him. Now, to you, for instance, I could say quite straight: *Vous êtes au-dessus de cela, mon cher, je n'ai pas le sou.*¹ And do you know,' said he,

¹ You are above that [i.e. above despising me for my misfortunes], my dear fellow, I have not a halfpenny.

looking desperately into my eyes, 'I tell you straight, I am now in terrible difficulties; *Pouvez-vous me prêter dix roubles argent?*'¹ My sister must send me something by the next mail, *et mon père. . . .*'

'Oh, with pleasure,' said I, though on the contrary it was painful and vexatious, especially because, having lost at cards the day before, I myself had only a little over five rubles and they were in Nikita's possession. 'Directly,' I said, rising, 'I will go and get them from the tent.'

'No, it will do later, *ne vous dérangez pas.*'²

But without listening to him I crept into the closed tent where my bed stood and where the captain lay asleep.

'Alexey Ivanich, please lend me ten rubles till our allowances are paid,' said I to the captain, shaking him.

'What! cleared out again? And it's only yesterday you resolved not to play any more!' said the captain, still half-asleep.

'No, I have not been playing! But I want it—please lend it me.'

'Makatyuk!'³ shouted the captain to his orderly, 'get me the money-box and bring it here.'

'Hush, not so loud,' I said, listening to Guskov's measured footsteps outside the tent.

'What! . . . Why not so loud?'

'Oh, that fellow in the ranks asked me for a loan. He's just outside.'

'If I had known that, I would not have given it you,' remarked the captain. 'I have heard about him, he's the dirtiest young scamp.'

Still the captain let me have the money all the same, ordered the money-box to be put away and the tent properly closed, and again repeating, 'If I had known what it was for I would not have given it

¹ Can you lend me ten rubles?

² Do not trouble yourself.

you,' he wrapped himself, head and all, in his blanket. 'Remember you owe me thirty-two now!' he shouted after me.

When I came out of the tent Guskov was pacing up and down in front of the little seats, his short bandy-legged figure in the ugly cap with the long white wool disappearing in the darkness and reappearing as he passed in and out of the candle-light. He pretended not to notice me. I gave him the paper-money. He said '*Merci*,' and crumpling it up he put it in his trouser-pocket.

'I suppose play is in full swing at Paul Dmitrich's now!' he then began.

'Yes, I suppose so.'

'He plays so queerly, always *à rebours*,¹ and does not hedge. When you have luck it is all right, but when it goes against you you may lose terribly. He is a proof of it. On this expedition he has lost more than fifteen hundred rubles, counting the things he has lost. And with what self-control he used to play formerly! So that that officer of yours seemed even to doubt his honesty.'

'Oh, he did not mean anything. . . .'² Nikita, have we any Caucasian wine left?' I asked, very much relieved by Guskov's loquacity. Nikita grumbled again, but brought us the wine all the same, and again crossly watched Guskov emptying his cup. In Guskov's manner the former nonchalance again became apparent. I wished him to go away, and thought he stopped only because he did not like to go immediately after receiving the money. I was silent.

'How could you, with means at your disposal and no necessity, *de gaieté de cœur*² make up your mind to come and serve in the Caucasus? That is what I don't understand,' he said.

I tried to justify myself for this step that seemed to him so strange.

¹ Reversing.

² From light-heartedness.

'I can imagine how uncongenial the society of these officers must be to you: men without an idea of education. It is impossible for you and them to understand one another. Why, you may live here for ten years, and except cards and wine and talk about rewards and campaigns, you will see nothing and hear nothing.'

I did not like his being so certain that I shared his opinion, and I assured him with perfect sincerity that I was very fond of cards and wine, and of talks about campaigns, and that I did not wish for better comrades than those I had. But he would not believe me.

'Oh, you do not really mean it,' he continued: 'and the absence of women—I mean *femmes comme il faut*¹—is not that a terrible privation? I don't know what I wouldn't give to transport myself into a drawing-room now, and take a peep, though but through a crack, at a charming woman.'

He was silent a moment and drank another cup of wine.

'O God, O God! It is still possible we may some day meet again in Petersburg among men, live with human beings, with women.'

He emptied the bottle and said: 'Oh, *pardon*, perhaps you would have taken some more, I am so terribly absent-minded. And I'm afraid I have drunk too much, *et je n'ai pas la tête forte*.² There was a time when I lived on the Morskaya³ *au rez-de-chaussée*.⁴ I had a delightful little flat and furniture—you know I had a knack for arranging things elegantly and not too expensively. It is true *mon père* gave me the crockery, and plants, and excellent silver plate. *Le matin je sortais*,⁵ then calls, at five o'clock *régulièrement*

¹ Women of good breeding.

² And I have not a strong head.

³ Morskaya—one of the best streets in Petersburg.

⁴ On the ground floor. ⁵ In the morning I went out.

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I went to dine with her, and often found her alone. *Il faut avouer que c'était une femme ravissante!*¹ Did you not know her? Not at all?

'No.'

'You know, there was so much of that womanliness about her, that tenderness, and then such love! . . . O God! I did not know how to value my happiness then. . . . Or when we returned from the theatre and had supper together. It was never dull in her company, *toujours gaie, toujours aimante.*² Yes, I did not then foresee how rare a joy it was. *Et j'ai beaucoup à me reprocher*³ in regard to her. *Je l'ai fait souffrir, et souvent*⁴—I was cruel. Oh, what a delightful time it was! But I am wearying you.'

'No, not at all.'

'Then I will tell you about our evenings. I used to enter—oh, that staircase, I knew every plant-pot on it—the very door-handle—all was so nice, so familiar to me—then the ante-room, and then her room. . . . No, it will never, never, return! She writes to me even now; I can, if you like, even show you her letters. But I am no longer what I was—I am ruined, I am no longer worthy of her! . . . Yes, I am completely ruined! *Je suis cassé.*⁵ I have neither energy nor pride; nothing, not even nobility. . . . Yes, I am ruined! and no one will ever understand what I have suffered. Every one is indifferent. I am a lost man! I can never rise again, because I have sunk morally . . . sunk into the mire . . . sunk. . . .' And a real, deep despair sounded in his voice at that moment; he did not look at me, but sat motionless.

'Why give way to such despair?' I said.

'Because I am vile; this life has destroyed me; all

¹ It must be admitted that she was a ravishing woman.

² Always gay, always loving.

³ And I have much to reproach myself with.

⁴ I made her suffer, often.

⁵ I am broken.

that was in me has perished. I no longer suffer proudly, but basely; I have no *dignité dans le malheur*.¹ I am insulted every moment and I bear it all, and go to meet insults half-way. The mud *a déteint sur moi*.² I have become coarse myself, have forgotten what I knew, I can't even speak French now, and I feel that I am base and despicable. I can't fight in these surroundings; it is impossible! I might perhaps have been a hero: give me a regiment, gold epaulettes, and trumpeters; but to march side by side with some uncivilized Antonov Bondarenko or other and to think there is no difference between him and me, it is all the same whether I get killed or he does—that is the thought that is killing me. You understand how terrible it is that some ragamuffin may kill me—a man who thinks and feels—and that he might as well kill Antonov by my side, a creature indistinguishable from a brute; and it is quite likely to happen that it is I who will be killed and not Antonov—it is always so, *une fatalité* for all that is lofty or good. I know they call me a coward. Granted that I am a coward. It is true I am a coward and cannot help it; but it is not enough that I am a coward, according to them I am also a beggar and a contemptible fellow. There, I have just begged money from you, and you have a right to despise me. No, take back your money,' and he held out to me the crumpled note; 'I want you to respect me.' He covered his face with his hands and began to cry, and I did not in the least know what to say or do.

'Don't go on like that,' said I; 'you are too sensitive; you should not take things so much to heart: don't analyse but look at things simply. You say yourself that you are a man of character; face your task, you have not much longer to suffer,' I said to him very incoherently, for I was excited both by feelings of pity and by a feeling of repentance at

¹ Dignity in misfortune.

² Has stained me.

having allowed myself to condemn a man who was truly and deeply suffering.

'Yes,' he began; 'had I but once since I came into this hell heard a single word of advice, sympathy, or friendship—a single human word such as I hear from you—I might have borne everything calmly, have faced my task, and even behaved like a soldier; but now it is terrible. . . . When I reason sanely I long for death. Why should I care for a life of dishonour, or for myself who am dead to all that is good in life? But at the least sign of danger I can't help craving for this vile life and guarding it as if it were something very precious, and I can't, *je ne puis pas*,¹ master myself. . . . That is, I can,' he continued, after a moment's pause; 'but it costs me too great an effort, a tremendous effort when I am alone. When others are present, and in ordinary circumstances when going into action, I am brave enough—*j'ai fait mes preuves*,²—because I have self-love and am proud—that is my fault—and in the presence of others . . . I say, let me spend the night with you—they'll be playing all night in our tent. I can sleep anywhere—on the ground.'

While Nikita was making up a bed we rose, and again, in the dark, began walking up and down the battery. Guskov must really have had a very weak head, for after only two cups of vodka and two glasses of wine he was unsteady on his feet. When we had walked away from the candle I noticed that he put the ten-ruble note, which he had held in his hand all through the foregoing conversation, back into his pocket, trying not to let me see it. He continued to say that he felt he might yet rise if he had a man like myself to take an interest in him.

We were about to enter the tent to go to bed when suddenly a cannon-ball whistled over us and struck into the ground not far off. It was very strange: the

¹ I cannot.

² I have shown it.

quiet, sleeping camp, our conversation—and suddenly the enemy's ball flying, God knows whence, right in among our tents: so strange that it was some time before I could realize what had happened. But one of our soldiers, Andreev, who was pacing up and down the battery on guard, came towards me.

'He's sneaked within range. There's the place he fired from,' remarked he.

'The captain must be roused,' said I, and glanced at Guskov.

He had crouched nearly to the earth and stammered, trying to say something, 'This . . . this . . . is unple . . . this is . . . most . . . absurd.' He said no more, and I did not see how and where he suddenly vanished.

In the captain's tent a candle was lit and we heard him coughing, as he always did on waking; but he soon appeared, demanding the linstock to light his little pipe with.

'What's the matter, old man?' said he, smiling. 'It seems I am to have no sleep to-night; first you come with your "fellow from the ranks", and now it's Shamyl. What are we going to do? Shall we reply or not? Nothing was mentioned about it in the orders?'

'Nothing at all. There he is again,' said I; 'and this time with two guns.'

And, in fact, before us, a little to the right, two fires were seen in the darkness like a pair of eyes, and then a ball flew past, as well as an empty shell, probably one of our own returned to us—which gave a loud and shrill whistle. The soldiers crept out of the neighbouring tents and could be heard clearing their throats, stretching themselves, and talking.

'Hear him a-whistling through the fuse-hole just like a nightingale!' remarked an artilleryman.

'Call Nikita!' said the captain, with his usual kindly banter. 'Nikita, don't go hiding yourself; come and listen to the Mountain nightingales.'

'Why not, y'r honour?' said Nikita, as he came up and stood by the captain. 'I have seen them nightingales and am not afraid of 'em; but there's that guest who was here a moment ago drinking your wine, he cut his sticks soon enough when he heard 'em; went past our tent like a ball, doubled up like some animal.'

'Well, someone must ride over to the Chief of Artillery,' said the captain to me in a grave and authoritative tone, 'to ask whether we are to reply to the shots or not. We can't hit anything, but we can shoot for all that. Be so good as to go and ask. Order a horse to be saddled, you'll get there quicker; take my Polkan, if you like.'

Five minutes later the horse was brought, and I started to find the Chief of Artillery.

'Mind, the watchword is *pole*,' whispered the careful captain, 'or you won't be allowed to pass the cordon.'

It was barely half a mile to where the Chief of Artillery was stationed. The whole way lay among tents. As soon as I had left the light of our own camp-fires behind, it was so dark that I could not even see my horse's ears—only the camp-fires, which seemed now very near, now very far away, flickered before my eyes. Having given the horse the rein and let him take his own course for a little, I began to distinguish the white four-cornered tents, and then the black ruts of the road. Half an hour later, after having asked my way some three or four times, twice stumbled over tent-pegs and been sworn at each time from within the tent, and after having been twice stopped by sentries, I reached the Chief of Artillery at last.

While on my way I heard two more shots fired at our camp, but they did not reach the place where the staff was stationed. The Chief of Artillery ordered not to fire, especially now that the enemy had ceased

firing; so I returned, leading my horse and making my way on foot among the infantry tents. More than once, while passing a soldier's tent in which I saw a light, I slackened my pace to listen to a tale told by some wag, or to a book read out by some 'literate' person, to whom a whole company listened, tightly packed inside and crowding outside the tent and now and then interrupting the reader with their remarks, or I caught merely some scrap of conversation about an expedition, about home, or about the officers.

Passing one of the tents of the 3rd Battalion, I heard Guskov's loud voice speaking very merrily and confidently. He was answered by young voices, not of privates but of gentlemen, as merry as his own. This was evidently a cadet's or sergeant-major's tent. I stopped.

'I have long known him,' Guskov was saying. 'When I was in Petersburg he often came to see me and I visited him. He belonged to very good society.'

'Whom are you talking about?' asked a tipsy voice.

'About the prince,' answered Guskov. 'We are related, you know; more than that, we are old friends. You know, gentlemen, it is a good thing to have such an acquaintance. He is awfully rich, you see. A hundred rubles is nothing to him; so I've taken a little of him till my sister sends me some.'

'Well, then send . . .'

'All right! . . . Savelich, old boy!' came Guskov's voice from the tent as he drew near to the entrance; 'here are ten rubles, go to the canteen and get two bottles of Kahetinsky. . . . What else, gentlemen? Speak up!' and Guskov, bare-headed and with hair dishevelled, reeled out of the tent. Throwing open his sheepskin and thrusting his hands into the pockets of his greyish trousers, he stopped at the entrance. Though he was in the light and I in the dark, I trembled with fear lest he should see me, and moved on, trying not to make a noise.

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‘Who’s there?’ shouted Guskov at me in a perfectly tipsy voice. The cold air evidently had an effect on him. ‘What devil is prowling about there with a horse?’

I did not reply, and silently found my way out on to the road.

1856

THE COSSACKS

A TALE OF 1852

THE COSSACKS

CHAPTER I

ALL is quiet in Moscow. The squeak of wheels is seldom heard in the snow-covered street. There are no lights left in the windows and the street lamps have been extinguished. Only the sound of bells, borne over the city from the church towers, suggests the approach of morning. The streets are deserted. At rare intervals a night-cabman's sledge kneads up the snow and sand in the street as the driver makes his way to another corner where he falls asleep while waiting for a fare. An old woman passes by on her way to church, where a few wax candles burn with a red light reflected on the gilt mountings of the icons. Workmen are already getting up after the long winter night and going to their work—but for the gentlefolk it is still evening.

From a window in Chevalier's Restaurant a light—illegal at that hour—is still to be seen through a chink in the shutter.* At the entrance a carriage, a sledge, and a cabman's sledge, stand close together with their backs to the curbstone. A three-horse sledge from the post-station is there also.¹ A yard-porter muffled up and pinched with cold is sheltering behind the corner of the house.

'And what's the good of all this jawing?' thinks the footman who sits in the hall weary and haggard. 'This always happens when I'm on duty.' From the adjoining room are heard the voices of three young men, sitting there at a table on which are wine and the remains of supper. One, a rather plain, thin, neat little man, sits looking with tired kindly eyes at his friend, who is about to start on a journey. Another,

¹ In those pre-rail days travellers usually relied on vehicles hired at the posting-stations.

a tall man, lies on a sofa beside a table on which are empty bottles, and plays with his watch-key. A third, wearing a short, fur-lined coat, is pacing up and down the room stopping now and then to crack an almond between his strong, rather thick, but well-tended fingers. He keeps smiling at something and his face and eyes are all aglow. He speaks warmly and gesticulates, but evidently does not find the words he wants and those that occur to him seem to him inadequate to express what has risen to his heart.

‘Now I can speak out fully,’ said the traveller. ‘I don’t want to defend myself, but I should like you at least to understand me as I understand myself, and not look at the matter superficially. You say I have treated her badly,’ he continued, addressing the man with the kindly eyes who was watching him.

‘Yes, you are to blame,’ said the latter, and his look seemed to express still more kindliness and weariness.

‘I know why you say that,’ rejoined the one who was leaving. ‘To be loved is in your opinion as great a happiness as to love, and if a man obtains it, it is enough for his whole life.’

‘Yes, quite enough, my dear fellow, more than enough!’ confirmed the plain little man, opening and shutting his eyes.

‘But why shouldn’t the man love too?’ said the traveller thoughtfully, looking at his friend with something like pity. ‘Why shouldn’t one love? Because love doesn’t come. . . . No, to be beloved is a misfortune. It is a misfortune to feel guilty because you do not give something you cannot give. O my God!’ he added, with a gesture of his arm. ‘If it all happened reasonably, and not all topsy-turvy—not in our way but in a way of its own! Why, it’s as if I had stolen that love! You think so too, don’t deny it. You must think so. But will you believe it, of all the horrid and stupid things I have found time to do in my life—

and there are many—this is one I do not and cannot repent of. Neither at the beginning nor afterwards did I lie to myself or to her. It seemed to me that I had at last fallen in love, but then I saw that it was an involuntary falsehood, and that that was not the way to love, and I could not go on, but she did. Am I to blame that I couldn't? What was I to do?"

"Well, it's ended now!" said his friend, lighting a cigar to master his sleepiness. "The fact is that you have not yet loved and do not know what love is."

The man in the fur-lined coat was going to speak again, and put his hands to his head, but could not express what he wanted to say.

"Never loved! . . . Yes, quite true, I never have! But after all, I have within me a desire to love, and nothing could be stronger than that desire! But then, again, does such love exist? There always remains something incomplete. Ah well! What's the use of talking? I've made an awful mess of life! But anyhow it's all over now; you are quite right. And I feel that I am beginning a new life."

"Which you will again make a mess of," said the man who lay on the sofa playing with his watch-key. But the traveller did not listen to him.

"I am sad and yet glad to go," he continued. "Why I am sad I don't know."

And the traveller went on talking about himself, without noticing that this did not interest the others as much as it did him. A man is never such an egotist as at moments of spiritual ecstasy. At such times it seems to him that there is nothing on earth more splendid and interesting than himself.

"Dmítri Andréich! The coachman won't wait any longer!" said a young serf, entering the room in a sheepskin coat, with a scarf tied round his head. "The horses have been standing since twelve, and it's now four o'clock!"

Dmítri Andréich looked at his serf, Vanyúsha. The

scarf round Vanyúsha's head, his felt boots and sleepy face, seemed to be calling his master to a new life of labour, hardship, and activity.

'True enough! Good-bye!' said he, feeling for the unfastened hook and eye on his coat.

In spite of advice to mollify the coachman by another tip, he put on his cap and stood in the middle of the room. The friends kissed once, then again, and after a pause, a third time. The man in the fur-lined coat approached the table and emptied a champagne glass, then took the plain little man's hand and blushed.

'Ah well, I will speak out all the same. . . . I must and will be frank with you because I am fond of you. . . . Of course you love her—I always thought so—don't you?'

'Yes,' answered his friend, smiling still more gently.

'And perhaps . . .'

'Please sir, I have orders to put out the candles,' said the sleepy attendant, who had been listening to the last part of the conversation and wondering why gentlefolk always talk about one and the same thing. 'To whom shall I make out the bill? To you, sir?' he added, knowing whom to address and turning to the tall man.

'To me,' replied the tall man. 'How much?'

'Twenty-six rubles.'

The tall man considered for a moment, but said nothing and put the bill in his pocket.

The other two continued their talk.

'Good-bye, you are a capital fellow!' said the short plain man with the mild eyes.

Tears filled the eyes of both. They stepped into the porch.

'Oh, by the by,' said the traveller, turning with a blush to the tall man, 'will you settle Chevalier's bill and write and let me know?'

'All right, all right!' said the tall man, pulling on his gloves. 'How I envy you!' he added quite unexpectedly when they were out in the porch.

The traveller got into his sledge, wrapped his coat about him, and said: 'Well then, come along!' He even moved a little to make room in the sledge for the man who said he envied him—his voice trembled.

'Good-bye, Mitya! I hope that with God's help you . . .' said the tall one. But his wish was that the other would go away quickly, and so he could not finish the sentence.

They were silent a moment. Then someone again said, 'Good-bye,' and a voice cried, 'Ready,' and the coachman touched up the horses.

'Hy, Elisár!' one of the friends called out, and the other coachman and the sledge-drivers began moving, clicking their tongues and pulling at the reins. Then the stiffened carriage-wheels rolled squeaking over the frozen snow.

'A fine fellow, that Olénin!' said one of the friends. 'But what an idea to go to the Caucasus—as a cadet, too! I wouldn't do it for anything. . . . Are you dining at the club to-morrow?'

'Yes.'

They separated.

The traveller felt warm, his fur coat seemed too hot. He sat on the bottom of the sledge and unfastened his coat, and the three shaggy post-horses dragged themselves out of one dark street into another, past houses he had never before seen. It seemed to Olénin that only travellers starting on a long journey went through those streets. All was dark and silent and dull around him, but his soul was full of memories, love, regrets, and a pleasant tearful feeling.

CHAPTER II

'I'M fond of them, very fond! . . . First-rate fellows! . . . Fine.' he kept repeating, and felt ready to cry. But why he wanted to cry, who were the first-rate fellows he was so fond of—was more than he quite

knew. Now and then he looked round at some house and wondered why it was so curiously built; sometimes he began wondering why the post-boy and Vanyúsha, who were so different from himself, sat so near, and together with him were being jerked about and swayed by the tugs the side-horses gave at the frozen traces, and again he repeated: 'First rate . . . very fond!' and once he even said: 'And how it seizes one . . . excellent!' and wondered what made him say it. 'Dear me, am I drunk?' he asked himself. He had had a couple of bottles of wine, but it was not the wine alone that was having this effect on Olénin. He remembered all the words of friendship heartily, bashfully, spontaneously (as he believed) addressed to him on his departure. He remembered the clasp of hands, glances, the moments of silence, and the sound of a voice saying, '*Good-bye, Mitya!*' when he was already in the sledge. He remembered his own deliberate frankness. And all this had a touching significance for him. Not only friends and relatives, not only people who had been indifferent to him, but even those who did not like him, seemed to have agreed to become fonder of him, or to forgive him, before his departure, as people do before confession or death. 'Perhaps I shall not return from the Caucasus,' he thought. And he felt that he loved his friends and some one besides. He was sorry for himself. But it was not love for his friends that so stirred and uplifted his heart that he could not repress the meaningless words that seemed to rise of themselves to his lips; nor was it love for a woman (he had never yet been in love) that had brought on this mood. Love for himself, love full of hope—warm young love for all that was good in his own soul (and at that moment it seemed to him that there was nothing but good in it)—compelled him to weep and to mutter incoherent words.

Olénin was a youth who had never completed his university course, never served anywhere (having

only a nominal post in some government office or other), who had squandered half his fortune and had reached the age of twenty-four without having done anything or even chosen a career. He was what in Moscow society is termed *un jeune homme*.

At the age of eighteen he was free—as only rich young Russians in the 'forties who had lost their parents at an early age could be. Neither physical nor moral fetters of any kind existed for him; he could do as he liked, lacking nothing and bound by nothing. Neither relatives, nor fatherland, nor religion, nor wants, existed for him. He believed in nothing and admitted nothing. But although he believed in nothing he was not a morose or blasé young man, nor self-opinionated, but on the contrary continually let himself be carried away. He had come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as love, yet his heart always overflowed in the presence of any young and attractive woman. He had long been aware that honours and position were nonsense, yet involuntarily he felt pleased when at a ball Prince Sergius came up and spoke to him affably. But he yielded to his impulses only in so far as they did not limit his freedom. As soon as he had yielded to any influence and became conscious of its leading on to labour and struggle, he instinctively hastened to free himself from the feeling or activity into which he was being drawn and to regain his freedom. In this way he experimented with society-life, the civil service, farming, music—to which at one time he intended to devote his life—and even with the love of women in which he did not believe. He meditated on the use to which he should devote that power of youth which is granted to man only once in a lifetime: that force which gives a man the power of making himself, or even—as it seemed to him—of making the universe, into anything he wishes: should it be to art, to science, to love of woman, or to practical activities? It is true that some

people are devoid of this impulse, and on entering life at once place their necks under the first yoke that offers itself and honestly labour under it for the rest of their lives. But Olénin was too strongly conscious of the presence of that all-powerful God of Youth—of that capacity to be entirely transformed into an aspiration or idea—the capacity to wish and to do—to throw oneself headlong into a bottomless abyss without knowing why or wherefore. He bore this consciousness within himself, was proud of it and, without knowing it, was happy in that consciousness. Up to that time he had loved only himself, and could not help loving himself, for he expected nothing but good of himself and had not yet had time to be disillusioned. On leaving Moscow he was in that happy state of mind in which a young man, conscious of past mistakes, suddenly says to himself, ‘That was not the real thing.’ All that had gone before was accidental and unimportant. Till then he had not really tried to live, but now with his departure from Moscow a new life was beginning—a life in which there would be no mistakes, no remorse, and certainly nothing but happiness. o

It is always the case on a long journey that till the first two or three stages have been passed imagination continues to dwell on the place left behind, but with the first morning on the road it leaps to the end of the journey and there begins building castles in the air. So it happened to Olénin.

After leaving the town behind, he gazed at the snowy fields and felt glad to be alone in their midst. Wrapping himself in his fur coat, he lay at the bottom of the sledge, became tranquil, and fell into a doze. The parting with his friends had touched him deeply, and memories of that last winter spent in Moscow and images of the past, mingled with vague thoughts and regrets, rose unbidden in his imagination.

He remembered the friend who had seen him off

and his relations with the girl they had talked about. The girl was rich. 'How could he love her knowing that she loved me?' thought he, and evil suspicions crossed his mind. 'There is much dishonesty in men when one comes to reflect.' Then he was confronted by the question: 'But really, how is it I have never been in love? Every one tells me that I never have. Can it be that I am a moral monstrosity?' And he began to recall all his infatuations. He recalled his entry into society, and a friend's sister with whom he spent several evenings at a table with a lamp on it which lit up her slender fingers busy with needlework, and the lower part of her pretty delicate face. He recalled their conversations that dragged on like the game in which one passes on a stick which one keeps alight as long as possible, and the general awkwardness and restraint and his continual feeling of rebellion at all that conventionality. Some voice had always whispered: 'That's not it, that's not it,' and so it had proved. Then he remembered a ball and the mazurka he danced with the beautiful D—. 'How much in love I was that night and how happy! And how hurt and vexed I was next morning when I woke and felt myself still free! Why does not love come and bind me hand and foot?' thought he. 'No, there is no such thing as love! That neighbour who used to tell me, as she told Dubróvin and the Marshal, that she loved the stars, was not *it* either.' And now his farming and work in the country recurred to his mind, and in those recollections also there was nothing to dwell on with pleasure. 'Will they talk long of my departure?' came into his head; but who 'they' were he did not quite know. Next came a thought that made him wince and mutter incoherently. It was the recollection of M. Cappele the tailor, and the six hundred and seventy-eight rubles he still owed him, and he recalled the words in which he had begged him to wait another year, and the look of perplexity and

resignation which had appeared on the tailor's face. 'Oh, my God, my God!' he repeated, wincing and trying to drive away the intolerable thought. 'All the same and in spite of everything she loved me,' thought he of the girl they had talked about at the farewell supper. 'Yes, had I married her I should not now be owing anything, and as it is I am in debt to Vasílyev.' Then he remembered the last night he had played with Vasílyev at the club (just after leaving her), and he recalled his humiliating requests for another game and the other's cold refusal. 'A year's economizing and they will all be paid, and the devil take them! . . . But despite this assurance he again began calculating his outstanding debts, their dates, and when he could hope to pay them off. 'And I owe something to Morell as well as to Chevalier,' thought he, recalling the night when he had run up so large a debt. It was at a carousal at the gipsies arranged by some fellows from Petersburg: Sáška B——, an aide-de-camp to the Tsar, Prince D——, and that pompous old ——'. 'How is it those gentlemen are so self-satisfied?' thought he, 'and by what right do they form a clique to which they think others must be highly flattered to be admitted? Can it be because they are on the Emperor's staff? Why, it's awful what fools and scoundrels they consider other people to be! But I showed them that I at any rate, on the contrary, do not at all want their intimacy. All the same, I fancy Andrew, the steward, would be amazed to know that I am on familiar terms with a man like Sáška B——, a colonel and an aide-de-camp to the Tsar! Yes, and no one drank more than I did that evening, and I taught the gipsies a new song and everyone listened to it. Though I have done many foolish things, all the same I am a very good fellow,' thought he.

Morning found him at the third post-stage. He drank tea, and himself helped Vanyúsha to move

his bundles and trunks and sat down among them, sensible, erect, and precise, knowing where all his belongings were, how much money he had and where it was, where he had put his passport and the post-horse requisition and toll-gate papers, and it all seemed to him so well arranged that he grew quite cheerful and the long journey before him seemed an extended pleasure-trip.

All that morning and noon he was deep in calculations of how many versts he had travelled, how many remained to the next stage, how many to the next town, to the place where he would dine, to the place where he would drink tea, and to Stavrópol, and what fraction of the whole journey was already accomplished. He also calculated how much money he had with him, how much would be left over, how much would pay off all his debts, and what proportion of his income he would spend each month. Towards evening, after tea, he calculated that to Stavrópol there still remained seven-elevenths of the whole journey, that his debts would require seven months' economy and one-eighth of his whole fortune; and then, tranquillized, he wrapped himself up, lay down in the sledge, and again dozed off. His imagination was now turned to the future: to the Caucasus. All his dreams of the future were mingled with pictures of Amalat-Beks,¹ Circassian women, mountains, precipices, terrible torrents, and perils. All these things were vague and dim, but the love of fame and the danger of death furnished the interest of that future. Now, with unprecedented courage and a strength that amazed everyone, he slew and subdued an innumerable host of hillsmen; now he was himself a hillman and with them was maintaining their independence against the Russians. As soon as he pictured anything definite, familiar Moscow figures always

¹ Amalet-Bek, a character in a Russian novel of the Caucasus by Bestúzhev-Marlinsky.

appeared on the scene. Sáška B—— fights with the Russians or the hillsmen against him. Even the tailor Cappelé in some strange way takes part in the conqueror's triumph. Amid all this he remembered his former humiliations, weaknesses, and mistakes, and the recollection was not disagreeable. It was clear that there among the mountains, waterfalls, fair Circassians, and dangers, such mistakes could not recur. Having once made full confession to himself there was an end of it all. One other vision, the sweetest of them all, mingled with the young man's every thought of the future—the vision of a woman. And there, among the mountains, she appeared to his imagination as a Circassian slave, a fine figure with a long plait of hair and deep submissive eyes. He pictured a lonely hut in the mountains, and on the threshold *she* stands awaiting him when, tired and covered with dust, blood, and fame, he returns to her. He is conscious of her kisses, her shoulders, her sweet voice, and her submissiveness. She is enchanting, but uneducated, wild, and rough. In the long winter evenings he begins her education. She is clever and gifted and quickly acquires all the knowledge essential. Why not? She can quite easily learn foreign languages, read the French masterpieces and understand them: *Notre Dame de Paris*, for instance, is sure to please her. She can also speak French. In a drawing-room she can show more innate dignity than a lady of the highest society. She can sing, simply, powerfully, and passionately. . . . 'Oh, what nonsense!' said he to himself. But here they reached a post-station and he had to change into another sledge and give some tips. But his fancy again began searching for the 'nonsense' he had relinquished, and again fair Circassians, glory, and his return to Russia with an appointment as aide-de-camp and a lovely wife rose before his imagination. 'But there's no such thing as love,' said he to himself. 'Fame is all rubbish. But the six hundred and seventy-

eight rubles? . . . And the conquered land that will bring me more wealth than I need for a lifetime? It will not be right though to keep all that wealth for myself. I shall have to distribute it. But to whom? Well, six hundred and seventy-eight rubles to Cappelé and then we'll see.' . . . Quite vague visions now cloud his mind, and only Vanyúsha's voice and the interrupted motion of the sledge break his healthy youthful slumber. Scarcely conscious, he changes into another sledge at the next stage and continues his journey.

Next morning everything goes on just the same: the same kind of post-stations and tea-drinking, the same moving horses' cruppers, the same short talks with Vanyúsha, the same vague dreams and drowsiness, and the same tired, healthy, youthful sleep at night.

CHAPTER III

THE farther Olénin travelled from Central Russia the farther he left his memories behind, and the nearer he drew to the Caucasus the lighter his heart became. 'I'll stay away for good and never return to show myself in society,' was a thought that sometimes occurred to him. 'These people whom I see here are *not* people. None of them know me and none of them can ever enter the Moscow society I was in or find out about my past. And no one in that society will ever know what I am doing, living among these people.' And quite a new feeling of freedom from his whole past came over him among the rough beings he met on the road whom he did not consider to be *people* in the sense that his Moscow acquaintances were. The rougher the people and the fewer the signs of civilization the freer he felt. Stavrópol, through which he had to pass, irked him. The sign-boards, some of them even in French, ladies in carriages, caps in the market-place, and a gentleman wearing a fur cloak and tall hat who was walking

along the boulevard and staring at the passers-by, quite upset him. 'Perhaps these people know some of my acquaintances,' he thought; and the club, his tailor, cards, society . . . came back to his mind. But after Stavrópol everything was satisfactory—wild and also beautiful and warlike, and Olénin felt happier and happier. All the Cossacks, post-boys, and post-station masters seemed to him simple folk with whom he could jest and converse simply, without having to consider to what class they belonged. They all belonged to the human race which, without his thinking about it, all appeared dear to Olénin, and they all treated him in a friendly way.

Already in the province of the Don Cossacks his sledge had been exchanged for a cart, and beyond Stavrópol it became so warm that Olénin travelled without wearing his fur coat. It was already Spring—an unexpected joyous Spring for Olénin. At night he was no longer allowed to leave the Cossack villages, and they said it was dangerous to travel in the evening. Vanyúsha began to be uneasy, and they carried a loaded gun in the cart. Olénin became still happier. At one of the post-stations the post-master told of a terrible murder that had been committed recently on the high road. They began to meet armed men. 'So this is where it begins!' thought Olénin, and kept expecting to see the snowy mountains of which mention was so often made. Once, towards evening, the Nogáy driver pointed with his whip to the mountains shrouded in clouds. Olénin looked eagerly, but it was dull and the mountains were almost hidden by the clouds. Olénin made out something grey and white and fleecy, but try as he would he could find nothing beautiful in the mountains of which he had so often read and heard. The mountains and the clouds appeared to him quite alike, and he thought the special beauty of the snow peaks, of which he had so often been told, was as much an invention as Bach's

music and the love of women, in which he did not believe. So he gave up looking forward to seeing the mountains. But early next morning, being awakened in his cart by the freshness of the air, he glanced carelessly to the right. The morning was perfectly clear. Suddenly he saw, about twenty paces away as it seemed to him at first glance, pure white gigantic masses with delicate contours, the distinct fantastic outlines of their summits showing sharply against the far-off sky. When he had realized the distance between himself and them and the sky and the whole immensity of the mountains, and felt the infinitude of all that beauty, he became afraid that it was but a phantasm or a dream. He gave himself a shake to rouse himself, but the mountains were still the same.

‘What’s that! What is it?’ he said to the driver.

‘Why, the mountains,’ answered the Nogáy driver with indifference.

‘And I too have been looking at them for a long while,’ said Vanyúsha. ‘Aren’t they fine? They won’t believe it at home.’

The quick progress of the three-horsed cart along the smooth road caused the mountains to appear to be running along the horizon, while their rosy crests glittered in the light of the rising sun. At first Olénin was only astonished at the sight, then gladdened by it; but later on, gazing more and more intently at that snow-peaked chain that seemed to rise not from among other black mountains, but straight out of the plain, and to glide away into the distance, he began by slow degrees to be penetrated by their beauty and at length to *feel* the mountains. From that moment all he saw, all he thought, and all he felt, acquired for him a new character, sternly majestic like the mountains! All his Moscow reminiscences, shame, and repentance, and his trivial dreams about the Caucasus, vanished and did not return. ‘Now it has begun,’ a solemn voice seemed to say to him. The

road and the Terek, just becoming visible in the distance, and the Cossack villages and the people, all no longer appeared to him as a joke. He looked at himself or Vanyúsha, and again thought of the mountains. . . . Two Cossacks ride by, their guns in their cases swinging rhythmically behind their backs, the white and bay legs of their horses mingling confusedly . . . and the mountains! Beyond the Terek rises the smoke from a Tartar village . . . and the mountains! The sun has risen and glitters on the Terek, now visible beyond the reeds . . . and the mountains! From the village comes a Tartar wagon, and women, beautiful young women, pass by . . . and the mountains! 'Abreks' canter about the plain, and here am I driving along and do not fear them! I have a gun, and strength, and youth . . . and the mountains!'

CHAPTER IV

THAT whole part of the Terek line (about fifty miles) along which lie the villages of the Grebénsk Cossacks is uniform in character both as to country and inhabitants. The Terek, which separates the Cossacks from the mountaineers, still flows turbid and rapid though already broad and smooth, always depositing greyish sand on its low reedy right bank and washing away the steep, though not high, left bank, with its roots of century-old oaks, its rotting plane trees, and young brushwood. On the right bank lie the villages of pro-Russian, though still somewhat restless, Tartars. Along the left bank, back half a mile from the river and standing five or six miles apart from one another, are Cossack villages. In olden times most of these villages were situated on the banks of the river; but the Terek, shifting northward from the mountains year by year, washed away those

¹ Hostile Chéchens who cross over to the Russian bank of the Terek to thief and plunder.

banks, and now there remain only the ruins of the old villages and of the gardens of pear and plum trees and poplars, all overgrown with blackberry bushes and wild vines. No one lives there now, and one only sees the tracks of the deer, the wolves, the hares, and the pheasants, who have learned to love these places. From village to village runs a road cut through the forest as a cannon-shot might fly. Along the roads are cordons of Cossacks and watch-towers with sentinels in them. Only a narrow strip about seven hundred yards wide of fertile wooded soil belongs to the Cossacks. To the north of it begin the sand-drifts of the Nogáy or Mozdók steppes, which stretch far to the north and run, Heaven knows where, into the Trukhmén, Astrakhán, and Kirghíz-Kaisátsk steppes. To the south, beyond the Térek, are the Great Chéchnya river, the Kochkállov range, the Black Mountains, yet another range, and at last the snowy mountains, which can just be seen but have never yet been scaled. In this fertile wooded strip, rich in vegetation, has dwelt as far back as memory runs the fine warlike and prosperous Russian tribe belonging to the sect of Old Believers,¹ and called the Grebénsk Cossacks.

Long long ago their Old Believer ancestors fled from Russia and settled beyond the Térek among the Chéchens on the Grében, the first range of wooded mountains of Chéchnya. Living among the Chéchens the Cossacks intermarried with them and adopted the manners and customs of the hill tribes, though they still retained the Russian language in all its purity, as well as their Old Faith. A tradition, still fresh among them, declares that Tsar Iván the Terrible came to the Térek, sent for their Elders, and gave

¹ Old Believer is a general name for the sects that separated from the Russo-Greek Church in the seventeenth century. Tobacco is one of the things prohibited by their rules.

them the land on this side of the river, exhorting them to remain friendly to Russia and promising not to enforce his rule upon them nor oblige them to change their faith. Even now the Cossack families claim relationship with the Chéchéns, and the love of freedom, of leisure, of plunder and of war, still form their chief characteristics. Only the harmful side of Russian influence shows itself—by interference at elections, by confiscation of church bells, and by the troops who are quartered in the country or march through it. A Cossack is inclined to hate less the *dzhigit*¹ hillsman who maybe has killed his brother, than the soldier quartered on him to defend his village, but who has defiled his hut with tobacco-smoke. He respects his enemy the hillsman and despises the soldier, who is in his eyes an alien and an oppressor. In reality, from a Cossack's point of view a Russian peasant is a foreign, savage, despicable creature, of whom he sees a sample in the hawkers who come to the country and in the Ukrainian immigrants whom the Cossack contemptuously calls 'wool-beaters'. For him, to be smartly dressed means to be dressed like a Circassian. The best weapons are obtained from the hillsman and the best horses are bought, or stolen, from them. A dashing young Cossack likes to show off his knowledge of Tartar, and when carousing talks Tartar even to his fellow Cossack. In spite of all these things this small Christian clan stranded in a tiny corner of the earth, surrounded by half-savage Mohammedan tribes and by soldiers, considers itself highly advanced, acknowledges none but Cossacks as human beings, and despises everybody else. The Cossack spends most of his time in the cordon, in action, or in hunting and fishing. He hardly ever works at home. When he

¹ Among the Chéchéns a *dzhigit* is much the same as a *brave* among the Indians, but the word is inseparably connected with the idea of skilful horsemanship.

stays in the village it is an exception to the general rule and then he is holiday-making. All Cossacks make their own wine, and drunkenness is not so much a general tendency as a rite, the non-fulfilment of which would be considered apostasy. The Cossack looks upon a woman as an instrument for his welfare; only the unmarried girls are allowed to amuse themselves. A married woman has to work for her husband from youth to very old age: his demands on her are the Oriental ones of submission and labour. In consequence of this outlook women are strongly developed both physically and mentally, and though they are—as everywhere in the East—nominally in subjection, they possess far greater influence and importance in family-life than Western women. Their exclusion from public life and inurement to heavy male labour give the women all the more power and importance in the household. A Cossack, who before strangers considers it improper to speak affectionately or needlessly to his wife, when alone with her is involuntarily conscious of her superiority. His house and all his property, in fact the entire homestead, has been acquired and is kept together solely by her labour and care. Though firmly convinced that labour is degrading to a Cossack and is only proper for a Nogáy labourer or a woman, he is vaguely aware of the fact that all he makes use of and calls his own is the result of that toil, and that it is in the power of the woman (his mother or his wife) whom he considers his slave, to deprive him of all he possesses. Besides, the continuous performance of man's heavy work and the responsibilities entrusted to her have endowed the Grebénsk women with a peculiarly independent masculine character and have remarkably developed their physical powers, common sense, resolution, and stability. The women are in most cases stronger, more intelligent, more developed, and handsomer than the men. A striking feature of a Grebénsk woman's

beauty is the combination of the purest Circassian type of face with the broad and powerful build of Northern women. Cossack women wear the Circassian dress—a 'Tartar smock, *besmet*,¹ and soft slippers—but they tie their kerchiefs round their heads in the Russian fashion. Smartness, cleanliness and elegance in dress and in the arrangement of their huts, are with them a custom and a necessity. In their relations with men the women, and especially the unmarried girls, enjoy perfect freedom.

Novomlinsk village was considered the very heart of Grebénsk Cossackdom. In it more than elsewhere the customs of the old Grebénsk population have been preserved, and its women have from time immemorial been renowned all over the Caucasus for their beauty. A Cossack's livelihood is derived from vineyards, fruit-gardens, water melon and pumpkin plantations, from fishing, hunting, maize and millet growing, and from war plunder. Novomlinsk village lies about two and a half miles away from the Terek, from which it is separated by a dense forest. On one side of the road which runs through the village is the river; on the other, green vineyards and orchards, beyond which are seen the driftsands of the Nogáy Steppe. The village is surrounded by earth-banks and prickly bramble hedges, and is entered by tall gates hung between posts and covered with little reed-thatched roofs. Beside them on a wooden gun-carriage stands an unwieldy cannon captured by the Cossacks at some time or other, and which has not been fired for a hundred years. A uniformed Cossack sentinel with dagger and gun sometimes stands, and sometimes does not stand, on guard beside the gates, and sometimes presents arms to a passing officer and sometimes does not. Below the roof of the gateway is written in black letters on a white board: 'Houses 266: male inhabitants 897: female 1012.' The Cossacks' house

¹ *Beshmet*, a Tartar garment with sleeves.

are all raised on pillars two and a half feet from the ground. They are carefully thatched with reeds and have large carved gables. If not new they are at least all straight and clean, with high porches of different shapes; and they are not built close together but have ample space around them, and are all picturesquely placed along broad streets and lanes. In front of the large bright windows of many of the houses, beyond the kitchen gardens, dark green poplars and acacias with their delicate pale verdure and scented white blossoms overtop the houses, and beside them grow flaunting yellow sunflowers, creepers, and grape vines. In the broad open square are three shops where drapery, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, locust beans and gingerbreads are sold; and surrounded by a tall fence, loftier and larger than the other houses, stands the Regimental Commander's dwelling with its casement windows, behind a row of tall poplars. Few people are to be seen in the streets of the village on week-days, especially in summer. The young men are on duty in the cordons or on military expeditions; the old ones are fishing or helping the women in the orchards and gardens. Only the very old, the sick, and the children, remain at home.

CHAPTER V

It was one of those wonderful evenings that occur only in the Caucasus. The sun had sunk behind the mountains but it was still light. The evening glow had spread over a third of the sky, and against its brilliancy the dull white immensity of the mountains was sharply defined. The air was rarefied, motionless, and full of sound. The shadow of the mountains reached for several miles over the steppe. The steppe, the opposite side of the river, and the roads, were all deserted. If very occasionally mounted men appeared, the Cossacks in the cordon and the Chéchens in their

aouls (villages) watched them with surprised curiosity and tried to guess who those questionable men could be. At nightfall people from fear of one another flock to their dwellings, and only birds and beasts fearless of man prowl in those deserted spaces. Talking merrily, the women who have been tying up the vines hurry away from the gardens before sunset. The vineyards, like all the surrounding district, are deserted, but the villages become very animated at that time of the evening. From all sides, walking, riding, or driving in their creaking carts, people move towards the village. Girls with their smocks tucked up and twigs in their hands run chatting merrily to the village gates to meet the cattle that are crowding together in a cloud of dust and mosquitoes which they bring with them from the steppe. The well-fed cows and buffaloes disperse at a run all over the streets and Cossack women in coloured *beshmets* go to and fro among them. You can hear their merry laughter and shrieks mingling with the lowing of the cattle. There an armed and mounted Cossack, on leave from the cordon, rides up to a hut and, leaning towards the window, knocks. In answer to the knock the handsome head of a young woman appears at the window and you can hear caressing, laughing voices. There a tattered Nogáy labourer, with prominent cheekbones, brings a load of reeds from the steppes, turns his creaking cart into the Cossack captain's broad and clean courtyard, and lifts the yoke off the oxen that stand tossing their heads while he and his master shout to one another in Tartar. Past a puddle that reaches nearly across the street, a barefooted Cossack woman with a bundle of firewood on her back makes her laborious way by clinging to the fences, holding her smock high and exposing her white legs. A Cossack returning from shooting calls out in jest: 'Lift it higher, shameless thing!' and points his gun at her. The woman lets down her smock and drops

the wood. An old Cossack, returning home from fishing with his trousers tucked up and his hairy grey chest uncovered, has a net across his shoulder containing silvery fish that are still struggling; and to take a short cut climbs over his neighbour's broken fence and gives a tug to his coat which has caught on the fence. There a woman is dragging a dry branch along and from round the corner comes the sound of an axe. Cossack children, spinning their tops wherever there is a smooth place in the street, are shrieking; women are climbing over fences to avoid going round. From every chimney rises the odorous *kisyak*¹ smoke. From every homestead comes the sound of increased bustle, precursor to the stillness of night.

Granny Ulítka, the wife of the Cossack cornet who is also teacher in the regimental school, goes out to the gates of her yard like the other women, and waits for the cattle which her daughter Maryánka is driving along the street. Before she has had time fully to open the wattle gate in the fence, an enormous buffalo cow surrounded by mosquitoes rushes up bellowing and squeezes in. Several well-fed cows slowly follow her, their large eyes gazing with recognition at their mistress as they swish their sides with their tails. The beautiful and shapely Maryánka enters at the gate and throwing away her switch quickly slams the gate to and rushes with all the speed of her nimble feet to separate and drive the cattle into their sheds. "Take off your slippers, you devil's wench!" shouts her mother, 'you've worn them into holes!' Maryánka is not at all offended at being called a 'devil's wench', but accepting it as a term of endearment cheerfully goes on with her task. Her face is covered with a kerchief tied round her head. She is wearing a pink smock and a green *beshmet*. She disappears inside the lean-to shed in the yard, following the big fat cattle; and from the shed comes her voice as she speaks

¹ *Kisyak*, fuel made of straw and manure.

gently and persuasively to the buffalo: 'Won't she stand still? What a creature! Come now, come old dear!' Soon the girl and the old woman pass from the shed to the dairy carrying two large pots of milk, the day's yield. From the dairy chimney rises a thin cloud of *kisyak* smoke: the milk is being used to make into clotted cream. The girl makes up the fire while her mother goes to the gate. Twilight has fallen on the village. The air is full of the smell of vegetables, cattle, and scented *kisyak* smoke. From the gates and along the streets Cossack women come running, carrying lighted rags. From the yards one hears the snorting and quiet chewing of the cattle eased of their milk, while in the street only the voices of women and children sound as they call to one another. It is rare on a week-day to hear the drunken voice of a man.

One of the Cossack wives, a tall, masculine old woman, approaches Granny Ulitka from the homestead opposite and asks her for a light. In her hand she holds a rag.

'Have you cleared up, Granny?'

'The girl is lighting the fire. Is it fire you want?' says Granny Ulitka, proud of being able to oblige her neighbour.

Both women enter the hut, and coarse hands unused to dealing with small articles tremblingly lift the lid of a match-box, which is a rarity in the Caucasus. The masculine-looking new-comer sits down on the doorstep with the evident intention of having a chat.

'And is your man at the school, Mother?' she asked.

'He's always teaching the youngsters, Mother. But he writes that he'll come home for the holidays,' said the cornet's wife.

'Yes, he's a clever man, one sees; it all comes useful.'

'Of course it does.'

'And my Lukáshka is at the cordon; they won't

let him come home,' said the visitor, though the cornet's wife had known all this long ago. She wanted to talk about her Lukáshka whom she had lately fitted out for service in the Cossack regiment, and whom she wished to marry to the cornet's daughter, Maryánka.

'So he's at the cordon?'

'He is, Mother. He's not been home since last holidays. The other day I sent him some shirts by Fómushkin. He says he's all right, and that his superiors are satisfied. He says they are looking out for *abreks* again. Lukáshka is quite happy, he says.'

'Ah well, thank God,' said the cornet's wife. "'Snatcher" is certainly the only word for him.' Lukáshka was surnamed 'the Snatcher' because of his bravery in snatching a boy from a watery grave, and the cornet's wife alluded to this, wishing in her turn to say something agreeable to Lukáshka's mother.

'I thank God, Mother, that he's a good son! He's a fine fellow, everyone praises him,' says Lukáshka's mother. 'All I wish is to get him married; then I could die in peace.'

'Well, aren't there plenty of young women in the village?' answered the cornet's wife slyly as she carefully replaced the lid of the match-box with her horny hands.

'Plenty, Mother, plenty,' remarked Lukáshka's mother, shaking her head. 'There's your girl now, your Maryánka—that's the sort of girl! You'd have to search through the whole place to find such another!'

The cornet's wife knows what Lukáshka's mother is after, but though she believes him to be a good Cossack she hangs back: first because she is a cornet's wife and rich, while Lukáshka is the son of a simple Cossack and fatherless, secondly because she does not want to part with her daughter yet, but chiefly because propriety demands it.

'Well when Maryánka grows up she'll be marriageable too,' she answers soberly and modestly.

'I'll send the matchmakers to you—I'll send them! Only let me get the vineyard done and then we'll come and make our bows to you,' says Lukáshka's mother. 'And we'll make our bows to Elias Vasílich too.'

'Elias, indeed!' says the cornet's wife proudly. 'It's to me you must speak! All in its own good time.'

Lukáshka's mother sees by the stern face of the cornet's wife that it is not the time to say anything more just now, so she lights her rag with the match and says, rising; 'Don't refuse us, think of my words. I'll go, it is time to light the fire.'

As she crosses the road swinging the burning rag, she meets Maryánka, who bows.

'Ah, she's a regular queen, a splendid worker, that girl!' she thinks, looking at the beautiful maiden. 'What need for her to grow any more? It's time she was married and to a good home; married to Lukáshka!'

But Granny Ulítka had her own cares and she remained sitting on the threshold thinking hard about something, till the girl called her.

CHAPTER VI

THE male population of the village spend their time on military expeditions and in the cordon—or 'at their posts', as the Cossacks say. Towards evening, that same Lukáshka the Snatcher, about whom the old women had been talking, was standing on a watch-tower of the Nízhni-Protótsk post situated on the very banks of the Térek. Leaning on the railing of the tower and screwing up his eyes, he looked now far into the distance beyond the Térek, now down at his fellow Cossacks, and occasionally he addressed the latter. The sun was already approaching the snowy

range that gleamed white above the fleecy clouds. The clouds undulating at the base of the mountains grew darker and darker. The clearness of evening was noticeable in the air. A sense of freshness came from the woods, though round the post it was still hot. The voices of the talking Cossacks vibrated more sonorously than before. The moving mass of the Terek's rapid brown waters contrasted more vividly with its motionless banks. The waters were beginning to subside and here and there the wet sands gleamed drab on the banks and in the shallows. The other side of the river, just opposite the cordon, was deserted; only an immense waste of low-growing reeds stretched far away to the very foot of the mountains. On the low bank, a little to one side, could be seen the flat-roofed clay houses and the funnel-shaped chimneys of a Chéchen village. The sharp eyes of the Cossack who stood on the watch-tower followed, through the evening smoke of the pro-Russian village, the tiny moving figures of the Chéchen women visible in the distance in their red and blue garments.

Although the Cossacks expected *abreks* to cross over and attack them from the Tartar side at any moment, especially as it was May when the woods by the Terek are so dense that it is difficult to pass through them on foot and the river is shallow enough in places for a horseman to ford it, and despite the fact that a couple of days before a Cossack had arrived with a circular from the commander of the regiment announcing that spies had reported the intention of a party of some eight men to cross the Terek, and ordering special vigilance—no special vigilance was being observed in the cordon. The Cossacks, unarmed and with their horses unsaddled just as if they were at home, spent their time some in fishing, some in drinking, and some in hunting. Only the horse of the man on duty was saddled, and with its feet hobbled was moving about by the brambles near the

wood, and only the sentinel had his Circassian coat on and carried a gun and sword. The corporal, a tall thin Cossack with an exceptionally long back and small hands and feet, was sitting on the earth-bank of a hut with his *beshtmet* unbuttoned. On his face was the lazy, bored expression of a superior, and having shut his eyes he dropped his head upon the palm first of one hand and then of the other. An elderly Cossack with a broad greyish-black beard was lying in his shirt, girdled with a black strap, close to the river and gazing lazily at the waves of the Terek as they monotonously foamed and swirled. Others, also overcome by the heat and half naked, were rinsing clothes in the Terek, plaiting a fishing line, or humming tunes as they lay on the hot sand of the river bank. One Cossack, with a thin face much burnt by the sun, lay near the hut evidently dead drunk, by a wall which though it had been in shadow some two hours previously was now exposed to the sun's fierce slanting rays.

Lukáshka, who stood on the watch-tower, was a tall handsome lad about twenty years old and very like his mother. His face and whole build, in spite of the angularity of youth, indicated great strength, both physical and moral. Though he had only lately joined the Cossacks at the front, it was evident from the expression of his face and the calm assurance of his attitude that he had already acquired the somewhat proud and warlike bearing peculiar to Cossacks and to men generally who continually carry arms, and that he felt he was a Cossack and fully knew his own value. His ample Circassian coat was torn in some places, his cap was on the back of his head Chéchen fashion, and his leggings had slipped below his knees. His clothing was not rich, but he wore it with that peculiar Cossack foppishness which consists in imitating the Chéchen brave. Everything of a real brave is ample, ragged, and neglected, only his weapons

are costly. But these ragged clothes and these weapons are belted and worn with a certain air and matched in a certain manner, neither of which can be acquired by everybody and which at once strike the eye of a Cossack or a hillsman. Lukáshka had this resemblance to a brave. With his hands folded under his sword, and his eyes nearly closed, he kept looking at the distant Tartar village. Taken separately his features were not beautiful, but anyone who saw his stately carriage and his dark-browed intelligent face would involuntarily say 'What a fine fellow!'

'Look at the women, what a lot of them are walking about in the village,' said he in a sharp voice, languidly showing his brilliant white teeth and not addressing anyone in particular.

Nazárka who was lying below immediately lifted his head and remarked:

'They must be going for water.'

'Supposing one scared them with a gun?' said Lukáshka, laughing. 'Wouldn't they be frightened?'

'It wouldn't reach.'

'What! Mine would carry beyond. Just wait a bit, and when their feast comes round I'll go and visit Giréy Khan and drink *buza*¹ there,' said Lukáshka, angrily swishing away the mosquitoes which attached themselves to him.

A rustling in the thicket drew the Cossack's attention. A pied mongrel half-setter, searching for a scent and violently wagging its scantily furred tail, came running to the cordon. Lukáshka recognized the dog as one belonging to his neighbour, Uncle Eróshka, a hunter, and saw, following it through the thicket, the approaching figure of the hunter himself.

Uncle Eróshka was a gigantic Cossack with a broad, snow-white beard and such broad shoulders and chest that in the wood, where there was no one to compare him with, he did not look particularly tall, so well

¹ Tartar beer made of millet.

proportioned were his powerful limbs. He wore a tattered coat and, over the bands with which his legs were swathed, sandals made of undressed deer's hide tied on with strings; while on his head he had a rough little white cap. He carried over one shoulder a screen to hide behind when shooting pheasants, and a bag containing a hen for luring hawks, and a small falcon; over the other shoulder, attached by a strap, was a wild cat he had killed; and stuck in his belt behind were some little bags containing bullets, gunpowder, and bread, a horse's tail to swish away the mosquitoes, a large dagger in a torn scabbard smeared with old bloodstains, and two dead pheasants. Having glanced at the cordon he stopped.

'Hi, Lyam!' he called to the dog in such a ringing bass that it awoke an echo far away in the wood; and throwing over his shoulder his big gun, of the kind the Cossacks call a 'flint', he raised his cap.

'Had a good day, good people, eh?' he said, addressing the Cossacks in the same strong and cheerful voice, quite without effort, but as loudly as if he were shouting to someone on the other bank of the river.

'Yes, yes, Uncle!' answered from all sides the voices of the young Cossacks.

'What have you seen? Tell us!' shouted Uncle Eróshka, wiping the sweat from his broad red face with the sleeve of his coat.

'Ah, there's a vulture living in the plane tree here, Uncle. As soon as night comes he begins hovering round,' said Nazárka, winking and jerking his shoulder and leg.

'Come, come!' said the old man incredulously.

'Really, Uncle! You must keep watch,' replied Nazárka with a laugh.

The other Cossacks began laughing.

The wag had not seen any vulture at all, but it had long been the custom of the young Cossacks in

the cordon to tease and mislead Uncle Eróshka every time he came to them.

'Eh, you fool, always lying!' exclaimed Lukáshka from the tower to Nazárka.

Nazárka was immediately silenced.

'It must be watched. I'll watch,' answered the old man to the great delight of all the Cossacks. 'But have you seen any boars?'

'Watching for boars, are you?' said the corporal, bending forward and scratching his back with both hands, very pleased at the chance of some distraction. 'It's *abreks* one has to hunt here and not boars! You've not heard anything, Uncle, have you?' he added, needlessly screwing up his eyes and showing his close-set white teeth.

'*Abreks*,' said the old man. 'No, I haven't, I say, have you any *chikhir*?¹ Let me have a drink, there's a good man. I'm really quite done up. When the time comes I'll bring you some fresh meat, I really will. Give me a drink!' he added.

'Well, and are you going to watch?' inquired the corporal, as though he had not heard what the other said.

'I did mean to watch to-night,' replied Uncle Eróshka. 'Maybe, with God's help, I shall kill something for the holiday. Then you shall have a share, you shall indeed!'

'Uncle! Hallo, Uncle!' called out Lukáshka sharply from above, attracting everybody's attention. All the Cossacks looked up at him. 'Just go to the upper water-course, there's a fine herd of boars there. I'm not inventing, really! The other day one of our Cossacks shot one there. I'm telling you the truth,' added he, readjusting the musket at his back and in a tone that showed he was not joking.

'Ah! Lukáshka the Snatcher is here!' said the old man, looking up. 'Where has he been shooting?'

¹ Home-made Caucasian wine.

'Haven't you seen? I suppose you're too young!' said Lukáshka. 'Close by the ditch,' he went on seriously with a shake of the head. 'We were just going along the ditch when all at once we heard something crackling, but my gun was in its case. Elias fired suddenly. . . . But I'll show you the place, it's not far. You just wait a bit. I know every one of their footpaths. . . . Daddy Mósev,' said he, turning resolutely and almost commandingly to the corporal, 'it's time to relieve guard!' and holding aloft his gun he began to descend from the watch-tower without waiting for the order.

'Come down!' said the corporal, after Lukáshka had started, and glanced round. 'Is it your turn, Gúrka? Then go. . . . True enough your Lukáshka has become very skillful,' he went on, addressing the old man. 'He keeps going about just like you, he doesn't stay at home. The other day he killed a boar.'

CHAPTER VII

THE sun had already set and the shades of night were rapidly spreading from the edge of the wood. The Cossacks finished their task round the cordon and gathered in the hut for supper. Only the old man still stayed under the plane tree watching for the vulture and pulling the string tied to the falcon's leg, but though a vulture was really perching on the plane tree it declined to swoop down on the lure. Lukáshka, singing one song after another, was leisurely placing nets among the very thickest brambles to trap pheasants. In spite of his tall stature and big hands every kind of work, both rough and delicate, prospered under Lukáshka's fingers.

'Hallo, Luke!' came Nazárka's shrill, sharp voice calling him from the thicket close by. 'The Cossacks have gone in to supper.'

Nazárka, with a live pheasant under his arm, forced

his way through the brambles and emerged on the footpath.

'Oh!' said Lukáshka, breaking off in his song, 'where did you get that cock pheasant? I suppose it was in my trap?'

Nazárka was of the same age as Lukáshka and had also only been at the front since the previous spring.

He was plain, thin and puny, with a shrill voice that rang in one's ears. They were neighbours and comrades. Lukáshka was sitting on the grass cross-legged like a Tartar, adjusting his nets.

'I don't know whose it was—yours, I expect.'

'Was it beyond the pit by the plane tree? Then it is mine! I set the nets last night.'

Lukáshka rose and examined the captured pheasant. After stroking the dark burnished head of the bird, which rolled its eyes and stretched out its neck in terror, Lukáshka took the pheasant in his hands.

'We'll have it in a pilau¹ to-night. You go and kill and pluck it.'

'And shall we eat it ourselves or give it to the corporal?'

'He has plenty!'

'I don't like killing them,' said Nazárka.

'Give it here!'

Lukáshka drew a little knife from under his dagger and gave it a swift jerk. The bird fluttered, but before it could spread its wings the bleeding head bent and quivered.

'That's how one should do it!' said Lukáshka, throwing down the pheasant. 'It will make a fat pilau.'

Nazárka shuddered as he looked at the bird.

'I say, Lukáshka, that fiend will be sending us to the ambush again to-night,' he said, taking up the bird. (He was alluding to the corporal.) 'He has sent Fómushkin to get wine, and it ought to be his turn. He always puts it on us.'

¹ A kind of stew, made with boiled rice.

Luskáshka went whistling along the cordon.

'Take the string with you,' he shouted.

Nazárka obeyed.

'I'll give him a bit of my mind to-day, I really will,' continued Nazárka. 'Let's say we won't go; we're tired out and there's an end of it! No, really, you tell him, he'll listen to you. It's too bad!'

'Get along with you! What a thing to make a fuss about!' said Lukáshka, evidently thinking of something else. 'What bosh! If he made us turn out of the village at night now, that would be annoying: there one can have some fun, but here what is there? It's all one whether we're in the cordon or in ambush. What a fellow you are!'

'And are you going to the village?'

'I'll go for the holidays.'

'Gúrka says your Dunáyka is carrying on with Fómushkin,' said Nazárka suddenly.

'Well, let her go to the devil,' said Lukáshka, showing his regular white teeth, though he did not laugh. 'As if I couldn't find another!'

'Gúrka says he went to her house. Her husband was out and there was Fómushkin sitting and eating pie. Gúrka stopped awhile and then went away, and passing by the window he heard her say, "He's gone, the fiend. . . . Why don't you eat your pie, my own? You needn't go home for the night," she says. And Gúrka under the window says to himself, "That's fine!"'

'You're making it up.'

'No, quite true, by Heaven!'

'Well, if she's found another let her go to the devil,' said Lukáshka, after a pause. 'There's no lack of girls and I was sick of her anyway.'

'Well, see what a devil you are!' said Nazárka. 'You should make up to the cornet's girl, Maryánka. Why doesn't she walk out with any one?'

Lukáshka frowned. 'What of Maryánka? They're all alike,' said he.

'Well, you just try . . .'

'What do you think? Are girls so scarce in the village?'

And Lukáshka recommenced whistling, and went along the cordon pulling leaves and branches from the bushes as he went. Suddenly, catching sight of a smooth sapling, he drew the knife from the handle of his dagger and cut it down. 'What a ramrod it will make,' he said, swinging the sapling till it whistled through the air.

The Cossacks were sitting round a low Tartar table on the earthen floor of the clay-plastered outer room of the hut, when the question of whose turn it was to lie in ambush was raised. 'Who is to go to-night?' shouted one of the Cossacks through the open door to the corporal in the next room.

'Who is to go?' the corporal shouted back. 'Uncle Burlák has been and Fómushkin too,' said he, not quite confidently. 'You two had better go, you and Nazárka,' he went on, addressing Lukáshka. 'And Ergushóv must go too; surely he has slept it off?'

'You don't sleep it off yourself so why should he?' said Nazárka in a subdued voice.

The Cossacks laughed.

Ergushóv was the Cossack who had been lying drunk and asleep near the hut. He had only that moment staggered into the room rubbing his eyes.

Lukáshka had already risen and was getting his gun ready.

'Be quick and go! Finish your supper and go!' said the corporal; and without waiting for an expression of consent he shut the door, evidently not expecting the Cossack to obey. 'Of course,' thought he, 'if I hadn't been ordered to I wouldn't send anyone, but an officer might turn up at any moment. As it is, they say eight *abruks* have crossed over.'

'Well, I suppose I must go,' remarked Ergushóv,

'it's the regulation. Can't be helped! The times are such. I say, we must go.'

Meanwhile Lukáshka, holding a big piece of pheasant to his mouth with both hands and glancing now at Nazárka now at Ergushóv, seemed quite indifferent to what passed and only laughed at them both. Before the Cossacks were ready to go into ambush, Uncle Eróshka, who had been vainly waiting under the plane tree till night fell, entered the dark outer room.

'Well, lads,' his loud bass resounded through the low-roofed room drowning all the other voices, 'I'm going with you. You'll watch for Chéchens and I for boars!'

CHAPTER VIII

It was quite dark when Uncle Eróshka and the three Cossacks, in their cloaks and shouldering their guns, left the cordon and went towards the place on the Terek where they were to lie in ambush. Nazárka did not want to go at all, but Lukáshka shouted at him and they soon started. After they had gone a few steps in silence the Cossacks turned aside from the ditch and went along a path almost hidden by reeds till they reached the river. On its bank lay a thick black log cast up by the water. The reeds around it had been recently beaten down.

'Shall we lie here?' asked Nazárka.

'Why not?' answered Lukáshka. 'Sit down here and I'll be back in a minute. I'll only show Daddy where to go.'

'This is the best place; here we can see and not be seen,' said Ergushóv, 'so it's here we'll lie. It's a first-rate place!'

Nazárka and Ergushóv spread out their cloaks and settled down behind the log, while Lukáshka went on with Uncle Eróshka.

'It's not far from here, Daddy,' said Lukáshka,

stepping softly in front of the old man; 'I'll show you where they've been—I'm the only one that knows, Daddy.'

'Show me! You're a fine fellow, a regular Snatcher!' replied the old man, also whispering.

Having gone a few steps Lukášhka stopped, stooped down over a puddle, and whistled. 'That's where they come to drink, d'you see?' He spoke in a scarcely audible voice, pointing to fresh hoof-prints.

'Christ bless you,' answered the old man. 'The boar will be in the hollow beyond the ditch,' he added. 'I'll watch, and you can go.'

Lukášhka pulled his cloak up higher and walked back alone, throwing swift glances now to the left at the wall of reeds, now to the Terek rushing by below the bank. 'I daresay he's watching or creeping along somewhere,' thought he of a possible Chéchen hillsman. Suddenly a loud rustling and a splash in the water made him start and seize his musket. From under the bank a boar leapt up—his dark outline showing for a moment against the glassy surface of the water and then disappearing among the reeds. Lukášhka pulled out his gun and aimed, but before he could fire the boar had disappeared in the thicket. Lukášhka spat with vexation and went on. On approaching the ambushade he halted again and whistled softly. His whistle was answered and he stepped up to his comrades.

Nazárka, all curled up, was already asleep. Ergushóv sat with his legs crossed and moved slightly to make room for Lukášhka.

'How jolly it is to sit here! It's really a good place,' said he. 'Did you take him there?'

'Showed him where,' answered Lukášhka, spreading out his cloak. 'But what a big boar I roused just now close to the water! I expect it was the very one! You must have heard the crash?'

'I did hear a beast crashing through. I knew at

once it was a beast. I thought to myself: "Lukáshka has roused a beast,"' Ergushóv said, wrapping himself up in his cloak. 'Now I'll go to sleep,' he added. 'Wake me when the cocks crow. We must have discipline. I'll lie down and have a nap, and then you will have a nap and I'll watch—that's the way.'

'Luckily I don't want to sleep,' answered Lukáshka.

The night was dark, warm, and still. Only on one side of the sky the stars were shining, the other and greater part was overcast by one huge cloud stretching from the mountain-tops. The black cloud, blending in the absence of any wind with the mountains, moved slowly onwards, its curved edges sharply defined against the deep starry sky. Only in front of him could the Cossack discern the Terek and the distance beyond. Behind and on both sides he was surrounded by a wall of reeds. Occasionally the reeds would sway and rustle against one another apparently without cause. Seen from down below, against the clear part of the sky, their waving tufts looked like the feathery branches of trees. Close in front at his very feet was the bank, and at its base the rushing torrent. A little farther on was the moving mass of glassy brown water which eddied rhythmically along the bank and round the shallows. Farther still, water, banks, and cloud all merged together in impenetrable gloom. Along the surface of the water floated black shadows, in which the experienced eyes of the Cossack detected trees carried down by the current. Only very rarely sheet-lightning, mirrored in the water as in a black glass, disclosed the sloping bank opposite. The rhythmic sounds of night—the rustling of the reeds, the snoring of the Cossacks, the hum of mosquitoes, and the rushing water, were every now and then broken by a shot fired in the distance, or by the gurgling of water when a piece of bank slipped down, the splash of a big fish, or the crashing of an animal breaking through the thick undergrowth in the wood.

Once an owl flew past along the Terek, flapping one wing against the other rhythmically at every second beat. Just above the Cossack's head it turned towards the wood and then, striking its wings no longer after every other flap but at every flap, it flew to an old plane tree where it rustled about for a long time before settling down among the branches. At every one of these unexpected sounds the watching Cossack listened intently, straining his hearing, and screwing up his eyes while he deliberately felt for his musket.

The greater part of the night was past. The black cloud that had moved westward revealed the clear starry sky from under its torn edge, and the golden upturned crescent of the moon shone above the mountains with a reddish light. The cold began to be penetrating. Nazárka awoke, spoke a little, and fell asleep again. Lukáshka feeling bored got up, drew the knife from his dagger-handle and began to fashion his stick into a ramrod. His head was full of the Chéchens who lived over there in the mountains, and of how their brave lads came across and were not afraid of the Cossacks, and might even now be crossing the river at some other spot. He thrust himself out of his hiding-place and looked along the river but could see nothing. And as he continued looking out at intervals upon the river and at the opposite bank, now dimly distinguishable from the water in the faint moonlight, he no longer thought about the Chéchens but only of when it would be time to wake his comrades, and of going home to the village. In the village he imagined Dunáyka, his 'little soul', as the Cossacks call a man's mistress, and thought of her with vexation. Silvery mists, a sign of coming morning, glittered white above the water, and not far from him young eagles were whistling and flapping their wings. At last the crowing of a cock reached him from the distant village, followed by the long-sustained note of another, which was again answered by yet other voices.

'Time to wake them,' thought Lukáshka, who had finished his ramrod and felt his eyes growing heavy. Turning to his comrades he managed to make out which pair of legs belonged to whom, when it suddenly seemed to him that he heard something splash on the other side of the Terek. He turned again towards the horizon beyond the hills, where day was breaking under the upturned crescent, glanced at the outline of the opposite bank, at the Terek, and at the now distinctly visible driftwood upon it. For one instant it seemed to him that he was moving and that the Terek with the drifting wood remained stationary. Again he peered out. One large black log with a branch particularly attracted his attention. The tree was floating in a strange way right down the middle of the stream, neither rocking nor whirling. It even appeared not to be floating altogether with the current, but to be crossing it in the direction of the shallows. Lukáshka stretching out his neck watched it intently. The tree floated to the shallows, stopped, and shifted in a peculiar manner. Lukáshka thought he saw an arm stretched out from beneath the tree. 'Supposing I killed an *abrek* all by myself!' he thought, and seized his gun with a swift, unhurried movement, putting up his gun-rest, placing the gun upon it, and holding it noiselessly in position. Cocking the trigger, with bated breath he took aim, still peering out intently. 'I won't wake them,' he thought. But his heart began beating so fast that he remained motionless, listening. Suddenly the trunk gave a plunge and again began to float across the stream towards our bank. 'Only not to miss . . .' thought he, and now by the faint light of the moon he caught a glimpse of a Tartar's head in front of the floating wood. He aimed straight at the head which appeared to be quite near—just at the end of his rifle's barrel. He glanced across. 'Right enough it is an *abrek*!' he thought joyfully, and suddenly rising to his knees he again took aim.

Having found the sight, barely visible at the end of the long gun, he said: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son', in the Cossack way learnt in his childhood, and pulled the trigger. A flash of lightning lit up for an instant the reeds and the water, and the sharp, abrupt report of the shot was carried across the river, changing into a prolonged roll somewhere in the far distance. The piece of driftwood now floated not across, but with the current, rocking and whirling.

'Stop, I say!' exclaimed Ergushóv, seizing his musket and raising himself behind the log near which he was lying.

'Shut up, you devil!' whispered Lukáshka, grinding his teeth. '*Abreks!*'

'Whom have you shot?' asked Nazárka. 'Who was it, Lukáshka?'

Lukáshka did not answer. He was reloading his gun and watching the floating wood. A little way off it stopped on a sand-bank, and from behind it something large that rocked in the water came into view.

'What did you shoot? Why don't you speak?' insisted the Cossacks.

'*Abreks*, I tell you!' said Lukáshka.

'Don't humbug! Did the gun go off? . . .'

'I've killed an *abrek*, that's what I fired at,' muttered Lukáshka in a voice choked by emotion, as he jumped to his feet. 'A man was swimming . . .' he said; pointing to the sand-bank. 'I killed him. Just look there.'

'Have done with your humbugging!' said Ergushóv again, rubbing his eyes.

'Have done with what? Look there,' said Lukáshka, seizing him by the shoulders and pulling him with such force that Ergushóv groaned.

He looked in the direction in which Lukáshka pointed, and discerning a body immediately changed his tone.

'O Lord! But I say, more will come! I tell you the

truth,' said he softly, and began examining his musket. 'That was a scout swimming across: either the others are here already or are not far off on the other side—I tell you for sure!'

Lukáshka was unfastening his belt and taking off his Circassian coat.

'What are you up to, you idiot?' exclaimed Ergushóv. 'Only show yourself and you're lost all for nothing, I tell you true! If you've killed him he won't escape. Let me have a little powder for my musket-pan—you have some? Nazárka, you go back to the cordon and look alive; but don't go along the bank or you'll be killed,—I tell you true.'

'Catch me going alone! Go yourself!' said Nazárka angrily.

Having taken off his coat, Lukáshka went down to the bank.

'Don't go in, I tell you!' said Ergushóv, putting some powder on the pan. 'Look, he's not moving. I can see. It's nearly morning; wait till they come from the cordon. You go, Nazárka. You're afraid! Don't be afraid, I tell you.'

'Luke, I say, Lukáshka! Tell us how you did it!' said Nazárka.

Lukáshka changed his mind about going into the water just then. 'Go quick to the cordon and I will watch. Tell the Cossacks to send out the patrol. If the *abreks* are on this side they must be caught,' said he.

'That's what I say. They'll get off,' said Ergushóv, rising. 'True they must be caught!'

Ergushóv and Nazárka rose and, crossing themselves, started off for the cordon—not along the river bank but breaking their way through the brambles to reach a path in the wood.

'Now mind, Lukáshka—they may cut you down here, so you'd best keep a sharp look-out, I tell you!'

'Go along; I know,' muttered Lukáshka, and having examined his gun again he sat down behind the log.

He remained alone and sat gazing at the shallows and listening for the Cossacks; but it was some distance to the cordon and he was tormented by impatience. He kept thinking that the other *abreks* who were with the one he had killed would escape. He was vexed with the *abreks* who were going to escape just as he had been with the boar that had escaped the evening before. He glanced round and at the opposite bank, expecting every moment to see a man, and having arranged his gun-rest he was ready to fire. The idea that he might himself be killed never entered his head.

CHAPTER IX

It was growing light. The Chéchen's body which was gently rocking in the shallow water was now clearly visible. Suddenly the reeds rustled not far from Luke and he heard steps and saw the feathery tops of the reeds moving. He set his gun at full cock and muttered: 'In the name of the Father and of the Son,' but when the cock clicked the sound of steps ceased. •

'Hullo, Cossacks! Don't kill your Daddy!' said a deep bass voice calmly; and moving the reeds apart Daddy Eróshka came up close to Luke.

'I very nearly killed you, by God I did!' said Lukáshka.

'What have you shot?' asked the old man.

His sonorous voice resounded through the wood and downward along the river, suddenly dispelling the mysterious quiet of night around the Cossack. It was as if everything had suddenly become lighter and more distinct.

'There now, Uncle, you have not seen anything, but I've killed a beast,' said Lukáshka, uncocking his gun and getting up with unnatural calmness.

The old man was staring intently at the white

back, now clearly visible, against which the Térék rippled.

‘He was swimming with a log on his back. I spied him out! . . . Look there. There! He’s got blue trousers, and a gun I think. . . . Do you see?’ inquired Luke.

‘How can one help seeing?’ said the old man angrily, and a serious and stern expression appeared on his face. ‘You’ve killed a brave,’ he said, apparently with regret.

‘Well, I sat here and suddenly saw something dark on the other side. I spied him when he was still over there. It was as if a man had come there and fallen in. Strange! And a piece of driftwood, a good-sized piece, comes floating, not with the stream but across it; and what do I see but a head appearing from under it! Strange! I stretched out of the reeds but could see nothing; then I rose and he must have heard, the beast, and crept out into the shallow and looked about. “No, you don’t!” I said, as soon as he landed and looked round, “you won’t get away!” Oh, there was something choking me! I got my gun ready but did not stir, and looked out. He waited a little and then swam out again; and when he came into the moonlight I could see his whole back. “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” . . . and through the smoke I see him struggling. He moaned, or so it seemed to me. “Ah,” I thought, “the Lord be thanked, I’ve killed him!” And when he drifted on to the sand-bank I could see him distinctly: he tried to get up but couldn’t. He struggled a bit and then lay down. Everything could be seen. Look, he does not move—he must be dead! The Cossacks have gone back to the cordon in case there should be any more of them.’

‘And so you got him!’ said the old man. ‘He is far away now, my lad! . . .’ And again he shook his head sadly.

Just then the sound reached them of breaking bushes and the loud voices of Cossacks approaching along the bank on horseback and on foot. 'Are you bringing the skiff?' shouted Lukáshka.

'You're a trump, Luke! Lug it to the bank!' shouted one of the Cossacks.

Without waiting for the skiff Lukáshka began to undress, keeping an eye all the while on his prey.

'Wait a bit, Nazárka is bringing the skiff,' shouted the corporal.

'You fool! Maybe he is alive and only pretending! Take your dagger with you!' shouted another Cossack.

'Get along,' cried Luke, pulling off his trousers. He quickly undressed and, crossing himself, jumped, plunging with a splash into the river. Then with long strokes of his white arms, lifting his back high out of the water and breathing deeply, he swam across the current of the Terek towards the shallows. A crowd of Cossacks stood on the bank talking loudly. Three horsemen rode off to patrol. The skiff appeared round a bend. Lukáshka stood up on the sand-bank, leaned over the body, and gave it a couple of shakes. 'Quite dead!' he shouted in a shrill voice.

The Chéchen had been shot in the head. He had on a pair of blue trousers, a shirt, and a Circassian coat, and a gun and dagger were tied to his back. Above all these a large branch was tied, and it was this which at first had misled Lukáshka.

'What a carp you've landed!' cried one of the Cossacks who had assembled in a circle, as the body, lifted out of the skiff, was laid on the bank, pressing down the grass.

'How yellow he is!' said another.

'Where have our fellows gone to search? I expect the rest of them are on the other bank. If this one had not been a scout he would not have swum that way. Why else should he swim alone?' said a third.

'Must have been a smart one to offer himself before

the others; a regular brave!' said Lukáshka mockingly, shivering as he wrung out his clothes that had got wet on the bank.

'His beard is dyed and cropped.'

'And he has tied a bag with a coat in it to his back.'

'That would make it easier for him to swim,' said some one.

'I say, Lukáshka,' said the corporal, who was holding the dagger and gun taken from the dead man. 'Keep the dagger for yourself and the coat too; but I'll give you three rubles for the gun. You see it has a hole in it,' said he, blowing into the muzzle. 'I want it just for a souvenir.'

Lukáshka did not answer. Evidently this sort of begging vexed him but he knew it could not be avoided.

'See, what a devil!' said he, frowning and throwing down the Chéchen's coat. 'If at least it were a good coat, but it's a mere rag.'

'It'll do to fetch firewood in,' said one of the Cossacks.

'Mósev, I'll go home,' said Lukáshka, evidently forgetting his vexation and wishing to get some advantage out of having to give a present to his superior.

'All right, you may go!'

'Take the body beyond the cordon, lads,' said the corporal, still examining the gun, 'and put a shelter over him from the sun. Perhaps they'll send from the mountains to ransom it.'

'It isn't hot yet,' said someone.

'And supposing a jackal tears him? Would that be well?' remarked another Cossack.

'We'll set a watch; if they should come to ransom him it won't do for him to have been torn.'

'Well, Lukáshka, whatever you do you must stand a pail of vodka for the lads,' said the corporal gaily.

'Of course! That's the custom,' chimed in the

Cossacks. 'See what luck God has sent you! Without ever having seen anything of the kind before, you've killed a brave!'

'Buy the dagger and coat and don't be stingy, and I'll let you have the trousers too,' said Lukáshka. 'They're too tight for me; he was a thin devil.'

One Cossack bought the coat for a ruble and another gave the price of two pails of vodka for the dagger.

'Drink, lads! I'll stand you a pail!' said Luke. 'I'll bring it myself from the village.'

'And cut up the trousers into kerchiefs for the girls!' said Nazárka.

The Cossacks burst out laughing.

'Have done laughing!' said the corporal. 'And take the body away. Why have you put the nasty thing by the hut?'

'What are you standing there for? Haul him along, lads!' shouted Lukáshka in a commanding voice to the Cossacks, who reluctantly took hold of the body, obeying him as though he were their chief. After dragging the body along for a few steps the Cossacks let fall the legs, which dropped with a lifeless jerk, and stepping apart they then stood silent for a few moments. Nazárka came up and straightened the head, which was turned to one side so that the round wound above the temple and the whole of the dead man's face were visible. 'See what a mark he has made right in the brain,' he said. 'He won't get lost. His owners will always know him!' No one answered, and again the Angel of Silence flew over the Cossacks.

The sun had risen high and its diverging beams were lighting up the dewy grass. Near by, the Térék murmured in the awakened wood and, greeting the morning, the pheasants called to one another. The Cossacks stood still and silent around the dead man, gazing at him. The brown body, with nothing on but the wet blue trousers held by a girdle over the sunken

stomach, was well shaped and handsome. The muscular arms lay stretched straight out by his sides; the blue, freshly shaven, round head with the clotted wound on one side of it was thrown back. The smooth tanned forehead contrasted sharply with the shaven part of the head. The open glassy eyes with lowered pupils stared upwards, seeming to gaze past everything. Under the red trimmed moustache the fine lips, drawn at the corners, seemed stiffened into a smile of good-natured subtle raillery. The fingers of the small hands covered with red hairs were bent inward, and the nails were dyed red.

Lukáška had not yet dressed. He was wet. His neck was redder and his eyes brighter than usual, his broad jaws twitched, and from his healthy body a hardly perceptible steam rose in the fresh morning air.

'He too was a man!' he muttered, evidently admiring the corpse.

'Yes, if you had fallen into his hands you would have had short shrift,' said one of the Cossacks.

The Angel of Silence had taken wing. The Cossacks began bustling about and talking. Two of them went to cut brushwood for a shelter, others strolled towards the cordon. Luke and Nazárka ran to get ready to go to the village.

Half an hour later they were both on their way homewards, talking incessantly and almost running through the dense woods which separated the Terek from the village.

'Mind, don't tell her I sent you, but just go and find out if her husband is at home,' Luke was saying in his shrill voice.

'And I'll go round to Yámka too,' said the devoted **Nazárka**. 'We'll have a spree, shall we?'

'When should we have one if not to-day?' replied Luke.

When they reached the village the two Cossacks drank, and lay down to sleep till evening.

CHAPTER X

ON the third day after the events above described, two companies of a Caucasian infantry regiment arrived at the Cossack village of Novomlinsk. The horses had been unharnessed and the companies' wagons were standing in the square. The cooks had dug a pit, and with logs gathered from various yards (where they had not been sufficiently securely stored) were now cooking the food; the pay-sergeants were settling accounts with the soldiers. The Service Corps men were driving piles in the ground to which to tie the horses, and the quartermasters were going about the streets just as if they were at home, showing officers and men to their quarters. Here were green ammunition boxes in a line, the company's carts, horses, and cauldrons in which buckwheat porridge was being cooked. Here were the captain and the lieutenant and the sergeant-major, Onísim Mikháylovich, and all this was in the Cossack village where it was reported that the companies were ordered to take up their quarters: therefore they were at home here. But why they were stationed there, who the Cossacks were, and whether they wanted the troops to be there, and whether they were Old Believers¹ or not—was all quite immaterial. Having received their pay and been dismissed, tired out and covered with dust, the soldiers noisily and in disorder, like a swarm of bees about to settle, spread over the squares and streets; quite regardless of the Cossacks' ill will, chattering merrily and with their muskets clinking, by twos and

¹ As already mentioned, the Old Believers, among other peculiarities, had a strong religious disapproval of the use of tobacco ('Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man,' Matt. xv. 11). This made the presence of Russian soldiers, who smoke, particularly objectionable to Old Believers.

threes they entered the huts and hung up their accoutrements, unpacked their bags, and bantered the women. At their favourite spot, round the porridge-cauldrons, a large group of soldiers assembled and with little pipes between their teeth they gazed, now at the smoke which rose into the hot sky, becoming visible when it thickened into white clouds as it rose, and now at the camp fires which were quivering in the pure air like molten glass, and bantered and made fun of the Cossack men and women because they do not live at all like Russians. In all the yards one could see soldiers and hear their laughter and the exasperated and shrill cries of Cossack women defending their houses and refusing to give the soldiers water or cooking utensils. Little boys and girls, clinging to their mothers and to each other, followed all the movements of the troopers (never before seen by them) with frightened curiosity, or ran after them at a respectful distance. The old Cossacks came out silently and dismally and sat on the earthen embankments of their huts, and watched the soldiers' activity with an air of leaving it all to the will of God without understanding what would come of it. •

Olénin, who had joined the Caucasian Army as a cadet three months before, was quartered in one of the best houses in the village, the house of the cornet, Elias Vasillich—that is to say at Granny Ulítka's.

'Goodness knows what it will be like, Dmítri Andréich,' said the panting Vanyúsha to Olénin, who, dressed in a Circassian coat and mounted on a Kabardá¹ horse which he had bought in Gróznœ, was after a five-hours' march gaily entering the yard of the quarters assigned to him.

'Why, what's the matter?' he asked, caressing his horse and looking merrily at the perspiring, dishevelled, and worried Vanyúsha, who had arrived with the baggage wagons and was unpacking. c

¹ See note on p. 245.

Olénin looked quite a different man. In place of his clean-shaven lips and chin he had a youthful moustache and a small beard. Instead of a sallow complexion, the result of nights turned into day, his cheeks, his forehead, and the skin behind his ears were now red with healthy sunburn. In place of a clean new black suit he wore a dirty white Circassian coat with a deeply pleated skirt, and he bore arms. Instead of a freshly starched collar, his neck was tightly clasped by the red band of his silk *besmet*. He wore Circassian dress but did not wear it well, and anyone would have known him for a Russian and not a Tartar brave. It was the thing—but not the real thing. But for all that, his whole person breathed health, joy, and satisfaction.

‘Yes, it seems funny to you,’ said Vanyúsha, ‘but just try to talk to these people yourself: they set themselves against one and there’s an end of it. You can’t get as much as a word out of them.’ Vanyúsha angrily threw down a pail on the threshold. ‘Somehow they don’t seem like Russians.’

‘You should speak to the Chief of the Village!’

‘But I don’t know where he lives,’ said Vanyúsha in an offended tone.

‘Who has upset you so?’ asked Olénin, looking round.

‘The devil only knows. Faugh! There is no real master here. They say he has gone to some kind of *kriga*,¹ and the old woman is a real devil. God preserve us!’ answered Vanyúsha, putting his hands to his head. ‘How we shall live here I don’t know. They are worse than Tartars, I do declare—though they consider themselves Christians! A Tartar is bad enough, but all the same he is more noble. Gone to the *kriga* indeed! What this *kriga* they have invented is, I don’t know!’ concluded Vanyúsha, and turned aside.

¹ A *kriga* is a place on the river-bank fenced in for fishing.

'It's not as it is in the serfs' quarters at home, eh?' chaffed Olénin without dismounting.

'Please sir, may I have your horse?' said Vanyúsha, evidently perplexed by this new order of things but resigning himself to his fate.

'So a Tartar is more noble, eh, Vanyúsha?' repeated Olénin, dismounting and slapping the saddle.

'Yes, you're laughing! You think it funny,' muttered Vanyúsha angrily.

'Come, don't be angry, Vanyúsha,' replied Olénin, still smiling. 'Wait a minute, I'll go and speak to the people of the house; you'll see I shall arrange everything. You don't know what a jolly life we shall have here. Only don't get upset.'

Vanyúsha did not answer. Screwing up his eyes he looked contemptuously after his master, and shook his head. Vanyúsha regarded Olénin as only his master, and Olénin regarded Vanyúsha as only his servant; and they would both have been much surprised if anyone had told them that they were friends, as they really were without knowing it themselves. Vanyúsha had been taken into his proprietor's house when he was only eleven and when Olénin was the same age. When Olénin was fifteen he gave Vanyúsha lessons for a time and taught him to read French, of which the latter was inordinately proud; and when in specially good spirits he still let off French words, always laughing stupidly when he did so.

Olénin ran up the steps of the porch and pushed open the door of the hut. Maryánka, wearing nothing but a pink smock, as all Cossack women do in the house, jumped away from the door, frightened, and pressing herself against the wall covered the lower part of her face with the broad sleeve of her Tartar smock. Having opened the door wider, Olénin in the semi-darkness of the passage saw the whole tall, shapely figure of the young Cossack girl. With the quick and eager curiosity of youth he involuntarily

noticed the firm maidenly form revealed by the fine print smock, and the beautiful black eyes fixed on him with childlike terror and wild curiosity. 'This is *she*,' thought Olénin. 'But there will be many others like her' came at once into his head, and he opened the inner door. Old Granny Ulítka, also dressed only in a smock, was stooping with her back turned to him, sweeping the floor.

'Good-day to you, Mother! I've come about my lodgings,' he began.

The Cossack woman, without unbending, turned her severe but still handsome face towards him.

'What have you come here for? Want to mock at us, eh? I'll teach you to mock; may the black plague seize you!' she shouted, looking askance from under her frowning brow at the new-comer.

Olénin had at first imagined that the way-worn, gallant Caucasian Army (of which he was a member) would be everywhere received joyfully, and especially by the Cossacks, our comrades in the war; and he therefore felt perplexed by this reception. Without losing presence of mind however he tried to explain that he meant to pay for his lodgings, but the old woman would not give him a hearing.

'What have you come for? Who wants a pest like you, with your scraped face? You just wait a bit; when the master returns he'll show you your place. I don't want your dirty money! A likely thing—just as if we had never seen any! You'll stink the house out with your beastly tobacco and want to put it right with money! Think we've never seen a pest! May you be shot in your bowels and your heart!' shrieked the old woman in a piercing voice, interrupting Olénin.

'It seems Vanyúsha was right!' thought Olénin. "'A Tartar would be nobler",' and followed by Granny Ulítka's abuse he went out of the hut. As he was leaving, Maryánka, still wearing only her pink

smock, but with her forehead covered down to her eyes by a white kerchief, suddenly slipped out from the passage past him. Pattering rapidly down the steps with her bare feet she ran from the porch, stopped, and looking round hastily with laughing eyes at the young man, vanished round the corner of the hut.

Her firm youthful step, the untamed look of the eyes glistening from under the white kerchief, and the firm stately build of the young beauty, struck Olénin even more powerfully than before. 'Yes, it must be *she*,' he thought, and troubling his head still less about the lodgings, he kept looking round at Maryánka as he approached Vanyúsha.

'There you see, the girl too is quite savage, just like a wild filly!' said Vanyúsha, who though still busy with the luggage wagon had now cheered up a bit. '*La fame!*' he added in a loud triumphant voice and burst out laughing.

CHAPTER XI

TOWARDS evening the master of the house returned from his fishing, and having learnt that the cadet would pay for the lodging, pacified the old woman and satisfied Vanyúsha's demands.

Everything was arranged in the new quarters. Their hosts moved into the winter hut and let their summer hut to the cadet for three rubles a month. Olénin had something to eat and went to sleep. Towards evening he woke up, washed and made himself tidy, dined, and having lit a cigarette sat down by the window that looked onto the street. It was cooler. The slanting shadow of the hut with its ornamental gables fell across the dusty road and even bent upwards at the base of the wall of the house opposite. The steep reed-thatched roof of that house shone in the rays of the setting sun. The air grew

fresher. Everything was peaceful in the village. The soldiers had settled down and become quiet. The herds had not yet been driven home and the people had not returned from their work.

Olénin's lodging was situated almost at the end of the village. At rare intervals, from somewhere far beyond the Terek in those parts whence Olénin had just come (the Chéchen or the Kumýtsk plain), came muffled sounds of firing. Olénin was feeling very well contented after three months of bivouac life. His newly washed face was fresh and his powerful body clean (an unaccustomed sensation after the campaign) and in all his rested limbs he was conscious of a feeling of tranquillity and strength. His mind, too, felt fresh and clear. He thought of the campaign and of past dangers. He remembered that he had faced them no worse than other men, and that he was accepted as a comrade among valiant Caucasians. His Moscow recollections were left behind Heaven knows how far! The old life was wiped out and a quite new life had begun in which there were as yet no mistakes. Here as a new man among new men he could gain a new and good reputation. He was conscious of a youthful and unreasoning joy of life. Looking now out of the window at the boys spinning their tops in the shadow of the house, now round his neat new lodging, he thought how pleasantly he would settle down to this new Cossack village life. Now and then he glanced at the mountains and the blue sky, and an appreciation of the solemn grandeur of nature mingled with his reminiscences and dreams. His new life had begun, not as he imagined it would when he left Moscow, but unexpectedly well. "The mountains, the mountains, the mountains!" they permeated all his thoughts and feelings.

'He's kissed his dog and licked the jug! . . . Daddy Eróshka has kissed his dog!' suddenly the little Cossacks who had been spinning their tops under the

window shouted, looking towards the side street. 'He's drunk his bitch, and his dagger!' shouted the boys, crowding together and stepping backwards.

These shouts were addressed to Daddy Eróshka, who with his gun on his shoulder and some pheasants hanging at his girdle was returning from his shooting expedition.

'I have done wrong, lads, I have!' he said, vigorously swinging his arms and looking up at the windows on both sides of the street. 'I have drunk the bitch; it was wrong,' he repeated, evidently vexed but pretending not to care.

Olénin was surprised by the boys' behaviour towards the old hunter, but was still more struck by the expressive, intelligent face and the powerful build of the man whom they called Daddy Eróshka.

'Here Daddy, here Cossack!' he called. 'Come here!'

The old man looked into the window and stopped.

'Good evening, good man,' he said, lifting his little cap off his cropped head.

'Good evening, good man,' replied Olénin. 'What is it the youngsters are shouting at you?'

Daddy Eróshka came up to the window. 'Why they're teasing the old man. No matter, I like it. Let them joke about their old daddy,' he said with those firm musical intonations with which old and venerable people speak. 'Are you an army commander?' he added.

'No, I am a cadet. But where did you kill those pheasants?' asked Olénin.

'I dispatched these three hens in the forest,' answered the old man, turning his broad back towards the window to show the hen pheasants which were hanging with their heads tucked into his belt and staining his coat with blood. 'Haven't you seen any?' he asked. 'Take a brace if you like! Here you are,' and he handed two of the pheasants in at the window. 'Are you a sportsman yourself?' he asked.

'I am. During the campaign I killed four myself.'

'Four? What a lot!' said the old man sarcastically. 'And are you a drinker? Do you drink *chikhir*?'

'Why not? I like a drink.'

'Ah, I see you are a trump! We shall be *kunaks*,¹ you and I,' said Daddy Eróshka.

'Step in,' said Olénin. 'We'll have a drop of *chikhir*.'

'I might as well,' said the old man, 'but take the pheasants.' The old man's face showed that he liked the cadet. He had seen at once that he could get free drinks from him, and that therefore it would be all right to give him a brace of pheasants.

Soon Daddy Eróshka's figure appeared in the doorway of the hut, and it was only then that Olénin became fully conscious of the enormous size and sturdy build of this man, whose red-brown face with its perfectly white broad beard was all furrowed by deep lines produced by age and toil. For an old man, the muscles of his legs, arms, and shoulders were quite exceptionally large and prominent. There were deep scars on his head under the short-cropped hair. His thick sinewy neck was covered with deep intersecting folds like a bull's. His horny hands were bruised and scratched. He stepped lightly and easily over the threshold, unslung his gun and placed it in a corner, and casting a rapid glance round the room noted the value of the goods and chattels deposited in the hut, and with out-turned toes stepped softly, in his sandals of raw hide, into the middle of the room. He brought with him a penetrating but not unpleasant smell of *chikhir* wine, vodka, gunpowder, and congealed blood.

Daddy Eróshka bowed down before the icons, smoothed his beard, and approaching Olénin held out his thick brown hand. '*Koshkildy*,' said he; 'That

¹ *Kunak*, a sworn friend for whose sake no sacrifice is too great.

is Tartar for "Good-day"—"Peace be unto you," it means in their tongue.'

'*Koshkildy*, I know,' answered Olénin, shaking hands.

'Eh, but you don't, you won't know the right order! Fool!' said Daddy Eróshka, shaking his head reproachfully. 'If anyone says "*Koshkildy*" to you, you must say "*Allah rasi bo sun*," that is, "God save you." That's the way, my dear fellow, and not "*Koshkildy*." But I'll teach you all about it. We had a fellow here, Elias Mosévich, one of your Russians, he and I were *kunaks*. He was a trump, a drunkard, a thief, a sportsman—and what a sportsman! I taught him everything.'

'And what will you teach me?' asked Olénin, who was becoming more and more interested in the old man.

'I'll take you hunting and teach you to fish. I'll show you Chéchens and find a girl for you, if you like—even that! That's the sort I am! I'm a wag!'—and the old man laughed. 'I'll sit down. I'm tired. *Karga*?' he added inquiringly.

'And what does "*Karga*" mean?' asked Olénin.

'Why, that means "All right" in Georgian. But I say it just so. It is a way I have, it's my favourite word. *Karga*, *Karga*. I say it just so; in fun I mean. Well, lad, won't you order the *chikhir*? You've got an orderly, haven't you? Hey, Iván! shouted the old man. 'All your soldiers are Iváns. Is yours Iván?'

'True enough, his name is Iván—Vanyúsha.¹ Here Vanyúsha! Please get some *chikhir* from our landlady and bring it here.'

'Iván or Vanyúsha, that's all one. Why are all your soldiers Iváns? Iván, old fellow,' said the old man, 'You tell them to give you some from the barrel they have begun. They have the best *chikhir* in the village. But don't give more than thirty kopéks for

¹ Vanyúsha is a diminutive form of 'Iván'.

the quart, mind, because that witch would be only too glad. . . . Our people are anathema people; stupid people,' Daddy Eróshka continued in a confidential tone after Vanyúsha had gone out. 'They do not look upon you as on men, you are worse than a Tartar in their eyes. "Worldly Russians" they say. But as for me, though you are a soldier you are still a man, and have a soul in you. Isn't that right? Elias Mosévich was a soldier, yet what a treasure of a man he was! Isn't that so, my dear fellow? That's why our people don't like me; but I don't care! I'm a merry fellow, and I like everybody. I'm Eróshka; yes, my dear fellow.'

And the old Cossack patted the young man affectionately on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XII

VANYÚSHA, who meanwhile had finished his house-keeping arrangements and had even been shaved by the company's barber and had pulled his trousers out of his high boots as a sign that the company was stationed in comfortable quarters, was in excellent spirits. He looked attentively but not benevolently at Eróshka, as at a wild beast he had never seen before, shook his head at the floor which the old man had dirtied and, having taken two bottles from under a bench, went to the landlady.

'Good evening, kind people,' he said, having made up his mind to be very gentle. 'My master has sent me to get some *chikhir*, will you draw some for me, good folk?'

The old woman gave no answer. The girl, who was arranging the kerchief on her head before a little Tartar mirror, looked round at Vanyúsha in silence.

'I'll pay money for it, honoured people,' said Vanyúsha, jingling the coppers in his pocket. 'Be kind to us and we too will be kind to you,' he added.

'How much?' asked the old woman abruptly. 'A quart.'

'Go, my own, draw some for them,' said Granny Ulítka to her daughter. 'Take it from the cask that's begun, my precious.'

The girl took the keys and a decanter and went out of the hut with Vanyúsha.

'Tell me, who is that young woman?' asked Olénin, pointing to Maryánka, who was passing the window. The old man winked and nudged the young man with his elbow.

'Wait a bit,' said he and reached out of the window. 'Khm,' he coughed, and bellowed 'Maryánka dear. Hallo, Maryánka, my girly, won't you love me, darling? I'm a wag,' he added in a whisper to Olénin. The girl, not turning her head and swinging her arms regularly and vigorously, passed the window with the peculiarly smart and bold gait of a Cossack woman and only turned her dark shaded eyes slowly towards the old man.

'Love me and you'll be happy,' shouted Eróshka, winking, and he looked questioningly at the cadet.

'I'm a fine fellow, I'm a wag!' he added. 'She's a regular queen, that girl. Eh?'

'She is lovely,' said Olénin. 'Call her here!'

'No, no,' said the old man. 'For that one a match is being arranged with Lukáshka, Luke, a fine Cossack, a brave, who killed an *abrek* the other day. I'll find you a better one. I'll find you one that will be all dressed up in silk and silver. Once I've said it I'll do it. I'll get you a regular beauty!'

'You, an old man—and say such things,' replied Olénin. 'Why, it's a sin!'

'A sin? Where's the sin?' said the old man emphatically. 'A sin to look at a nice girl? A sin to have some fun with her? Or is it a sin to love her? Is that so in your parts? . . . No, my dear fellow, it's not a sin, it's salvation! God made you and God made the girl

too. He made it all; so it is no sin to look at a nice girl. That's what she was made for; to be loved and to give joy. That's how I judge it, my good fellow.'

Having crossed the yard and entered a cool dark store-room filled with barrels, Maryánka went up to one of them and repeating the usual prayer plunged a dipper into it. Vanyúsha standing in the doorway smiled as he looked at her. He thought it very funny that she had only a smock on, close-fitting behind and tucked up in front, and still funnier that she wore a necklace of silver coins. He thought this quite un-Russian and that they would all laugh in the serfs' quarters at home if they saw a girl like that. '*La fille comme c'est tres bien*, for a change,' he thought. 'I'll tell that to my master.'

'What are you standing in the light for, you devil!' the girl suddenly shouted. 'Why don't you pass me the decanter!'

Having filled the decanter with cool red wine, Maryánka handed it to Vanyúsha.

'Give the money to Mother,' she said, pushing away the hand in which he held the money.

Vanyúsha laughed.

'Why are you so cross, little dear?' he said good-naturedly, irresolutely shuffling with his feet while the girl was covering the barrel.

She began to laugh.

'And you! Are you kind?'

'We, my master and I, are very kind,' Vanyúsha answered decidedly. 'We are so kind that wherever we have stayed our hosts were always very grateful. It's because he's generous.'

The girl stood listening.

'And is your master married?' she asked.

'No. The master is young and unmarried, because noble gentlemen can never marry young,' said Vanyúsha didactically.

'A likely thing! See what a fed-up buffalo he is—

and too young to marry! Is he the chief of you all?' she asked.

'My master is a cadet; that means he's not yet an officer, but he's more important than a general—he's an important man! Because not only our colonel, but the Tsar himself, knows him,' proudly explained Vanyúsha. 'We are not like those other beggars in the line regiment, and our papa himself was a Senator. He had more than a thousand serfs, all his own, and they send us a thousand rubles at a time. That's why everyone likes us. Another may be a captain but have no money. What's the use of that?'

'Go away. I'll lock up,' said the girl, interrupting him.

Vanyúsha brought Olénin the wine and announced that '*La fille c'est tres joulie*,' and, laughing stupidly, at once went out.

CHAPTER XIII

MEANWHILE the tattoo had sounded in the village square. The people had returned from their work. The herd lowed as in clouds of golden dust it crowded at the village gate. The girls and the women hurried through the streets and yards, turning in their cattle. The sun had quite hidden itself behind the distant snowy peaks. One pale bluish shadow spread over land and sky. Above the darkened gardens stars just discernible were kindling, and the sounds were gradually hushed in the village. The cattle having been attended to and left for the night, the women came out and gathered at the corners of the streets and, cracking sunflower seeds with their teeth, settled down on the earthen embankments of the houses. Later on Maryánka, having finished milking the buffalo and the other two cows, also joined one of these groups.

The group consisted of several women and girls and one old Cossack man.

They were talking about the *abrek* who had been

killed. The Cossack was narrating and the women questioning him.

'I expect he'll get a handsome reward,' said one of the women.

'Of course. It's said that they'll send him a cross.'

'Mósev did try to wrong him. Took the gun away from him, but the authorities at Kizlyár heard of it.'

'A mean creature that Mósev is!'

'They say Lukáshka has come home,' remarked one of the girls.

'He and Nazárka are merry-making at Yámka's.' (Yámka was an unmarried, disreputable Cossack woman who kept an illicit pot-house.) 'I heard say they had drunk half a pailful.'

'What luck that Snatcher has,' somebody remarked. 'A real snatcher. But there's no denying he's a fine lad, smart enough for anything, a right-minded lad! His father was just such another, Daddy Kiryák was: he takes after his father. When he was killed the whole village howled. Look, there they are,' added the speaker, pointing to the Cossacks who were coming down the street towards them. 'And Ergushóv has managed to come along with them too! The drunkard!'

Lukáshka, Nazárka, and Ergushóv, having emptied half a pail of vodka, were coming towards the girls. The faces of all three, but especially that of the old Cossack, were redder than usual. Ergushóv was reeling and kept laughing and nudging Nazárka in the ribs.

'Why are you not singing?' he shouted to the girls. 'Sing to our merry-making, I tell you!'

They were welcomed with the words, 'Had a good day? Had a good day?'

'Why sing? It's not a holiday,' said one of the women. 'You're tight, so you go and sing.'

Ergushóv roared with laughter and nudged Nazárka. 'You'd better sing. And I'll begin too. I'm clever, I tell you.'

'Are you asleep, fair ones?' said Nazárka. 'We've come from the cordon to drink your health. We've already drunk Lukáshka's health.'

Lukáshka, when he reached the group, slowly raised his cap and stopped in front of the girls. His broad cheek-bones and neck were red. He stood and spoke softly and sedately, but in his tranquillity and sedateness there was more of animation and strength than in all Nazárka's loquacity and bustle. He reminded one of a playful colt that with a snort and a flourish of its tail suddenly stops short and stands as though nailed to the ground with all four feet. Lukáshka stood quietly in front of the girls, his eyes laughed, and he spoke but little as he glanced now at his drunken companions and now at the girls. When Maryánka joined the group he raised his cap with a firm deliberate movement, moved out of her way and then stepped in front of her with one foot a little forward and with his thumbs in his belt, fingering his dagger. Maryánka answered his greeting with a leisurely bow of her head, settled down on the earth-bank, and took some seeds out of the bosom of her smock. Lukáshka, keeping his eyes fixed on Maryánka, slowly cracked seeds and spat out the shells. All were quiet when Maryánka joined the group.

'Have you come for long?' asked a woman, breaking the silence.

'Till to-morrow morning,' quietly replied Lukáshka.

'Well, God grant you get something good,' said the Cossack; 'I'm glad of it, as I've just been saying.'

'And I say so too,' put in the tipsy Ergushóv, laughing. 'What a lot of visitors have come,' he added, pointing to a soldier who was passing by. 'The soldiers' vodka is good—I like it.'

'They've sent three of the devils to *ús*,' said one of the women. 'Grandad went to the village Elders, but they say nothing can be done.'

'Ah, ha! Have you met with trouble?' said Ergushóv.

'I expect they have smoked you out with their tobacco?' asked another woman. 'Smoke as much as you like in the yard, I say, but we won't allow it inside the hut. Not if the Elder himself comes, I won't allow it. Besides, they may rob you. He's not quartered any of them on himself, no fear, that devil's son of an Elder.'

'You don't like it?' Ergushóv began again.

'And I've also heard say that the girls will have to make the soldiers' beds and offer them *chikhir* and honey,' said Nazárka, putting one foot forward and tilting his cap like Lukáshka.

Ergushóv burst into a roar of laughter, and seizing the girl nearest to him, he embraced her. 'I tell you true.'

'Now then, you black pitch!' squealed the girl, 'I'll tell your old woman.'

'Tell her,' shouted he. 'That's quite right what Nazárka says; a circular has been sent round. He can read, you know. Quite true!' And he began embracing the next girl.

'What are you up to, you beast?' squealed the rosy, round-faced Ústenka, laughing and lifting her arm to hit him.

The Cossack stepped aside and nearly fell.

'There, they say girls have no strength, and you nearly killed me.'

'Get away, you black pitch, what *dévil* has brought you from the cordon?' said Ústenka, and turning away from him she again burst out laughing. 'You were asleep and missed the *abrek*, didn't you? Suppose he had done for you it would have been all the better.'

'You'd have howled I expect,' said Nazárka, laughing.

'Howled! A likely thing.'

'Just look, she doesn't care. She'd howl, Nazárka, eh? Would she?' said Ergushóv.

Lukáshka all this time had stood silently looking at Maryánka. His gaze evidently confused the girl.

'Well, Maryánka! I hear they've quartered one of the chiefs on you?' he said, drawing nearer.

Maryánka, as was her wont, waited before she replied, and slowly raising her eyes looked at the Cossack. Lukáshka's eyes were laughing as if something special, apart from what was said, was taking place between himself and the girl.

'Yes, it's all right for them as they have two huts,' replied an old woman on Maryánka's behalf, 'but at Fómushkin's now they also have one of the chiefs quartered on them and they say one whole corner is packed full with his things, and the family have no room left. Was such a thing ever heard of as that they should turn a whole horde loose in the village?' she said. 'And what the plague are they going to do here?'

'I've heard say they'll build a bridge across the Térek,' said one of the girls.

'And I've been told that they will dig a pit to put the girls in because they don't love the lads,' said Nazárka, approaching Ústenka; and he again made a whimsical gesture which set everybody laughing, and Ergushóv, passing by Maryánka, who was next in turn, began to embrace an old woman.

'Why don't you hug Maryánka? You should do it to each in turn,' said Nazárka.

'No, my old one is sweeter,' shouted the Cossack, kissing the struggling old woman.

'You'll throttle me,' she screamed, laughing.

The tramp of regular footsteps at the other end of the street interrupted their laughter. Three soldiers in their cloaks, with their muskets on their shoulders, were marching in step to relieve guard by the ammunition wagon.

The corporal, an old cavalry man, looked angrily at the Cossacks and led his men straight along the road where Lukáshka and Nazárka were standing, so that they should have to get out of the way. Nazárka moved, but Lukáshka only screwed up his eyes and turned his broad back without moving from his place.

'People are standing here, so you go round,' he muttered, half turning his head and tossing it contemptuously in the direction of the soldiers.

The soldiers passed by in silence, keeping step regularly along the dusty road.

Maryánka began laughing and all the other girls chimed in.

'What swells!' said Nazárka, 'Just like long-skirted choristers,' and he walked a few steps down the road imitating the soldiers.

Again everyone broke into peals of laughter.

Lukáshka came slowly up to Maryánka.

'And where have you put up the chief?' he asked.

Maryánka thought for a moment.

'We've let him have the new hut,' she said.

'And is he old or young,' asked Lukáshka, sitting down beside her.

'Do you think I've asked?' answered the girl. 'I went to get him some *chikhir* and saw him sitting at the window with Daddy Eróshka. Red-headed he seemed. They've brought a whole cartload of things.'

And she dropped her eyes.

'Oh, how glad I am that I got leave from the cordon!' said Lukáshka, moving closer to the girl and looking straight in her eyes all the time.

'And have you come for long?' asked Maryánka, smiling slightly.

'Till the morning. Give me some sunflower seeds,' he said, holding out his hand.

Maryánka now smiled outright and unfastening the neckband of her smock:

'Don't take them all,' she said.

'Really I felt so dull all the time without you, I swear I did,' he said in a calm, restrained whisper, helping himself to some seeds out of the bosom of the girl's smock, and stooping still closer over her he continued with laughing eyes to talk to her in low tones.

'I won't come, I tell you,' Maryánka suddenly said aloud, leaning away from him.

'No really . . . what I wanted to say to you,' . . . whispered Lukáshka. 'By the Heavens! Do come!'

Maryánka shook her head, but did so with a smile.

'Nursey Maryánka! Hallo Nursey! Mammy is calling! Supper time!' shouted Maryánka's little brother, running towards the group.

'I'm coming,' replied the girl, 'Go, my dear, go alone—I'll come in a minute.'

Lukáshka rose and raised his cap.

'I expect I had better go home too, that will be best,' he said, trying to appear unconcerned but hardly able to repress a smile, and he disappeared behind the corner of the house.

Meanwhile night had entirely enveloped the village. Bright stars were scattered over the dark sky. The streets became dark and empty. Nazáľka remained with the women on the earth-bank and their laughter was still heard, but Lukáshka, having slowly moved away from the girls, crouched down like a cat and then suddenly started running lightly, holding his dagger to steady it: not homeward, however, but towards the cornet's house. Having passed two streets he turned into a lane and lifting the skirt of his coat sat down on the ground in the shadow of a fence. 'A regular cornet's daughter!' he thought about Maryánka. 'Won't even have a lark—the devil! But just wait a bit.'

The approaching footsteps of a woman attracted his attention. He began listening, and laughed all by himself. Maryánka with bowed head, striking the pales of the fences with a switch, was walking with

rapid regular strides straight towards him. Lukáshka rose. Maryánka started and stopped.

'What an accursed devil! You frightened me! So you have not gone home?' she said, and laughed aloud.

Lukáshka put one arm round her and with the other hand raised her face. 'What I wanted to tell you, by Heaven!' his voice trembled and broke.

'What are you talking of, at night time!' answered Maryánka. 'Mother is waiting for me, and you'd better go to your sweetheart.'

And freeing herself from his arms she ran away a few steps. When she had reached the wattle fence of her home she stopped and turned to the Cossack who was running beside her and still trying to persuade her to stay a while with him.

'Well, what do you want to say, midnight-gad-about?' and she again began laughing.

'Don't laugh at me, Maryánka! By the Heaven! Well, what if I have a sweetheart? May the devil take her! Only say the word and now I'll love *you*—I'll do anything you wish. Here they are!' and he jingled the money in his pocket. 'Now we can live splendidly. Others have pleasures, and I? I get no pleasure from you, Maryánka dear!'

The girl did not answer. She stood before him breaking her switch into little bits with a rapid movement of her fingers.

Lukáshka suddenly clenched his teeth and fists.

'And why keep waiting and waiting? Don't I love you, darling? You can do what you like with me,' said he suddenly, frowning angrily and seizing both her hands.

The calm expression of Maryánka's face and voice did not change.

'Don't bluster, Lukáshka, but listen to me,' she answered, ~~not~~ pulling away her hands but holding the Cossack at arm's length. 'It's true I am a girl,

but you listen to me! It does not depend on me, but if you love me I'll tell you this. Let go my hands, I'll tell you without.—I'll marry you, but you'll never get any nonsense from me,' said Maryánka without turning her face.

'What, you'll marry me? Marriage does not depend on us. Love me yourself, Maryánka dear,' said Lukáshka, from sullen and furious becoming again gentle, submissive, and tender, and smiling as he looked closely into her eyes.

Maryánka clung to him and kissed him firmly on the lips.

'Brother dear!' she whispered, pressing him convulsively to her. Then, suddenly tearing herself away, she ran into the gate of her house without looking round.

In spite of the Cossack's entreaties to wait another minute to hear what he had to say, Maryánka did not stop.

'Go,' she cried, 'you'll be seen! I do believe that devil, our lodger, is walking about the yard.'

'Cornet's daughter,' thought Lukáshka, 'She will marry me. Marriage is all very well, but you just love me!'

He found Nazárka at Yámka's house, and after having a spree with him went to Dunáyka's house, where, in spite of her not being faithful to him, he spent the night.

CHAPTER XIV

It was quite true that Olénin had been walking about the yard when Maryánka entered the gate, and had heard her say, 'That devil, our lodger, is walking about.' He had spent that evening with Daddy Eróshka in the porch of his new lodging. He had had a table, a samovar, wine, and a candle brought out, and over a cup of tea and a cigar he listened to the

tales the old man told seated on the threshold at his feet. Though the air was still, the candle dripped and flickered: now lighting up the post of the porch, now the table and crockery, now the cropped white head of the old man. Moths circled round the flame and, shedding the dust of their wings, fluttered on the table and in the glasses, flew into the candle flame, and disappeared in the black space beyond. Olénin and Eróshka had emptied five bottles of *chikhir*. Eróshka filled the glasses every time, offering one to Olénin, drinking his health, and talking untiringly. He told of Cossack life in the old days: of his father, 'The Broad', who alone had carried on his back a boar's carcass weighing three hundredweight, and drank two pails of *chikhir* at one sitting. He told of his own days and his chum Gírchik, with whom during the plague he used to smuggle felt cloaks across the Terek. He told how one morning he had killed two deer, and about his 'little soul' who used to run to him at the cordon at night. He told all this so eloquently and picturesquely that Olénin did not notice how time passed. 'Ah yes, my dear fellow, you did not know me in my golden days; then I'd have shown you things. To-day it's "Eróshka licks the jug", but then Eróshka was famous in the whole regiment. Whose was the finest horse? Who had a Gurda¹ sword? To whom should one go to get a drink? With whom go on the spree? Who should be sent to the mountains to kill Ahmet Khan? Why, always Eróshka! Whom did the girls love? Always Eróshka had to answer for it. Because I was a real brave: a drinker, a thief (I used to seize herds of horses in the mountains), a singer; I was a master of every art! There are no Cossacks like that nowadays. It's disgusting to look at them. When they're that high (Eróshka held his hand three feet from the ground)

¹ The swords and daggers most highly valued in the Caucasus are called by the name of the maker—Gurda.

they put on idiotic boots and keep looking at them—that's all the pleasure they know. Or they'll drink themselves foolish, not like men but all wrong. And who was I? I was Eróshka, the thief; they knew me not only in this village but up in the mountains. Tartar princes, my *kunaks*, used to come to see me! I used to be everybody's *kunak*. If he was a Tartar—with a Tartar; an Armenian—with an Armenian; a soldier—with a soldier; an officer—with an officer! I didn't care as long as he was a drinker. He says you should cleanse yourself from intercourse with the world, not drink with soldiers, not eat with a Tartar.'

'Who says all that?' asked Olénin.

'Why, our teacher! But listen to a Mullah or a Tartar Cadi. He says, "You unbelieving Giaours, why do you eat pig?" That shows that everyone has his own law. But I think it's all one. God has made everything for the joy of man. There is no sin in any of it. Take example from an animal. It lives in the Tartar's reeds or in ours. Wherever it happens to go, there is its home! Whatever God gives it, that it eats! But our people say we have to lick red-hot plates in hell for that. And I think it's all a fraud,' he added after a pause.

'What is a fraud?' asked Olénin.

'Why, what the preachers say. We had an army captain in Chervlëna who was my *kunak*: a fine fellow just like me. He was killed in Chéchnya. Well, he used to say that the preachers invent all that out of their own heads. "When you die the grass will grow on your grave and that's all!"' The old man laughed. 'He was a desperate fellow.'

'And how old are you?' asked Olénin.

'The Lord only knows! I must be about seventy. When a Tsaritsa reigned in Russia¹ I was no longer very small. So you can reckon it out. I must be seventy.'

¹ Catherine the Great died in 1799.

'Yes you must, but you are still a fine fellow.'

'Well, thank Heaven I am healthy, quite healthy, except that a woman, a witch, has harmed me. . . .'

'How?'

'Oh, just harmed me.'

'And so when you die the grass will grow?' repeated Olénin.

Eróshka evidently did not wish to express his thought clearly. He was silent for a while.

'And what did you think? Drink!' he shouted suddenly, smiling and handing Olénin some wine.

CHAPTER XV

'WELL, what was I saying?' he continued, trying to remember. 'Yes, that's the sort of man I am. I am a hunter. There is no hunter to equal me in the whole army. I will find and show you any animal and any bird, and what and where. I know it all! I have dogs, and two guns, and nets, and a screen and a hawk. I have everything, thank the Lord! If you are not bragging but are a real sportsman, I'll show you everything. Do you know what a man I am? When I have found a track—I know the animal. I know where he will lie down and where he'll drink or wallow. I make myself a perch and sit there all night watching. What's the good of staying at home? One only gets into mischief, gets drunk. And here women come and chatter, and boys shout at me—enough to drive one mad. It's a different matter when you go out at nightfall, choose yourself a place, press down the reeds and sit there and stay waiting, like a jolly fellow. One knows everything that goes on in the woods. One looks up at the sky: the stars move, you look at them and find out from them how the time goes. One looks round—the wood is rustling; one goes on waiting, now there comes a crackling—a boar comes to rub himself; one listens to hear the young

eaglets screech and then the cocks give voice in the village, or the geese. When you hear the geese you know it is not yet midnight. And I know all about it! Or when a gun is fired somewhere far away, thoughts come to me. One thinks, who is that firing? Is it another Cossack like myself who has been watching for some animal? And has he killed it? Or only wounded it so that now the poor thing goes through the reeds smearing them with its blood all for nothing? I don't like that! Oh, how I dislike it! Why injure a beast? You fool, you fool! Or one thinks, "Maybe an *abrek* has killed some silly little Cossack." All this passes through one's mind. And once as I sat watching by the river I saw a cradle floating down. It was sound except for one corner which was broken off. Thoughts did come that time! I thought some of your soldiers, the devils, must have got into a Tartar village and seized the Chéchen women, and one of the devils has killed the little one: taken it by its legs, and hit its head against a wall. Don't they do such things? Sh! Men have no souls! And thoughts came to me that filled me with pity. I thought: they've thrown away the cradle and driven the wife out, and her brave has taken his gun and come across to our side to rob us. One watches and thinks. And when one hears a litter breaking through the thicket, something begins to knock inside one. Dear one, come this way! "They'll scent me," one thinks; and one sits and does not stir while one's heart goes dun! dun! dun! and simply lifts you. Once this spring a fine litter came near me, I saw something black. "In the name of the Father and of the Son," and I was just about to fire when she grunts to her pigs: "Danger, children," she says, "there's a man here," and off they all ran, breaking through the bushes. And she had been so close I could almost have bitten her.' ¹

'How could a sow tell her brood that a *maľ* was there?' asked Olénin.

'What do you think? You think the beast's a fool? No, he is wiser than a man though you do call him a pig! He knows everything. Take this for instance. A man will pass along your track and not notice it; but a pig as soon as it gets onto your track turns and runs at once: that shows there is wisdom in him, since he scents your smell and you don't. And there is this to be said too: you wish to kill it and it wishes to go about the woods alive. You have one law and it has another. It is a pig, but it is no worse than you—it too is God's creature. Ah, dear! Man is foolish, foolish, foolish!' The old man repeated this several times and then, letting his head drop, he sat thinking.

Olénin also became thoughtful, and descending from the porch with his hands behind his back began pacing up and down the yard.

Eróshka, rousing himself, raised his head and began gazing intently at the moths circling round the flickering flame of the candle and burning themselves in it.

'Fool, fool!' he said. 'Where are you flying to? Fool, fool!' He rose and with his thick fingers began to drive away the moths.

'You'll burn, little fool! Fly this way, there's plenty of room.' He spoke tenderly, trying to catch them delicately by their wings with his thick fingers and then letting them fly again. 'You are killing yourself and I am sorry for you!'

He sat a long time chattering and sipping out of the bottle. Olénin paced up and down the yard. Suddenly he was struck by the sound of whispering outside the gate. Involuntarily holding his breath, he heard a woman's laughter, a man's voice, and the sound of a kiss. Intentionally rustling the grass under his feet he crossed to the opposite side of the yard, but after a while the wattle fence creaked. A Cossack in a dark Circassian coat and a white sheepskin cap passed along the other side of the fence (it was Luke),

and a tall woman with a white kerchief on her head went past Olénin. 'You and I have nothing to do with one another' was what Maryánka's firm step gave him to understand. He followed her with his eyes to the porch of the hut, and he even saw her through the window take off her kerchief and sit down. And suddenly a feeling of lonely depression and some vague longings and hopes, and envy of someone or other, overcame the young man's soul.

The last lights had been put out in the huts. The last sounds had died away in the village. The wattle fences and the cattle gleaming white in the yards, the roofs of the houses and the stately poplars, all seemed to be sleeping the labourers' healthy peaceful sleep. Only the incessant ringing voices of frogs from the damp distance reached the young man. In the east the stars were growing fewer and fewer and seemed to be melting in the increasing light, but overhead they were denser and deeper than before. The old man was dozing with his head on his hand. A cock crowed in the yard opposite, but Olénin still paced up and down thinking of something. The sound of a song sung by several voices reached him and he stepped up to the fence and listened. The voices of several young Cossacks carolled a merry song, and one voice was distinguishable among them all by its firm strength.

'Do you know who is singing there?' said the old man, rousing himself. 'It is the Brave, Lukáshka. He has killed a Chéchen and now he rejoices. And what is there to rejoice at? . . . The fool, the fool!'

'And have you ever killed people?' asked Olénin.

'You devil!' shouted the old man. 'What are you asking? One must not talk so. It is a serious thing to destroy a human being. . . . Ah, a very serious thing! Good-bye, my dear fellow. I've eaten my fill and am drunk,' he said rising. 'Shall I come to-morrow to go shooting?'

'Yes, come!'

'Mind, get up early; if you oversleep you will be fined!'

'Never fear, I'll be up before you,' answered Olénin.

The old man left. The song ceased, but one could hear footsteps and merry talk. A little later the singing broke out again but farther away, and Eróshka's loud voice chimed in with the other. 'What people, what a life!' thought Olénin with a sigh as he returned alone to his hut.

CHAPTER XVI

DADDY ERÓSHKA was a superannuated and solitary Cossack: twenty years ago his wife had gone over to the Orthodox Church and run away from him and married a Russian sergeant-major, and he had no children. He was not bragging when he spoke of himself as having been the boldest dare-devil in the village when he was young. Everybody in the regiment knew of his old-time prowess. The death of more than one Russian, as well as Chéchen, lay on his conscience. He used to go plundering in the mountains, and robbed the Russians too; and he had twice been in prison. The greater part of his life was spent in the forests, hunting. There he lived for days on a crust of bread and drank nothing but water. But on the other hand, when he was in the village he made merry from morning to night. After leaving Olénin he slept for a couple of hours and awoke before it was light. He lay on his bed thinking of the man he had become acquainted with the evening before. Olénin's 'simplicity' (simplicity in the sense of not grudging him a drink) pleased him very much, and so did Olénin himself. He wondered why the Russians were all 'simple' and so rich, and why they were educated, and yet knew nothing. He pondered on these questions and also considered what he might get out of Olénin.

Daddy Eróshka's hut was of a good size and not old, but the absence of a woman was very noticeable in it. Contrary to the usual cleanliness of the Cossacks, the whole of this hut was filthy and exceedingly untidy. A blood-stained coat had been thrown on the table, half a dough-cake lay beside a plucked and mangled crow with which to feed the hawk. Sandals of raw hide, a gun, a dagger, a little bag, wet clothes, and sundry rags lay scattered on the benches. In a corner stood a tub with stinking water, in which another pair of sandals were being steeped, and near by was a gun and a hunting-screen. On the floor a net had been thrown down and several dead pheasants lay there, while a hen tied by its leg was walking about near the table pecking among the dirt. In the unheated oven stood a broken pot with some kind of milky liquid. On the top of the oven a falcon was screeching and trying to break the cord by which it was tied, and a moulting hawk sat quietly on the edge of the oven, looking askance at the hen and occasionally bowing its head to right and left. Daddy Eróshka himself, in his shirt, lay on his back on a short bed rigged up between the wall and the oven, with his strong legs raised and his feet on the oven. He was picking with his thick fingers at the scratches left on his hands by the hawk, which he was accustomed to carry without wearing gloves. The whole room, especially near the old man, was filled with that strong but not unpleasant mixture of smells that he always carried about with him.

'*Uyde-ma, Daddy?*' (Is Daddy in?) came through the window a sharp voice, which he at once recognized as Lukáshka's.

'*Uyde, Uyde, Uyde.* I am in!' shouted the old man. 'Come in, neighbour Mark, Luke Mark. Come to see Daddy? On your way to the cordon?'

At the sound of his master's shout the hawk flapped his wings and pulled at his cord.

The old man was fond of Lukáshka, who was the only man he excepted from his general contempt for the younger generation of Cossacks. Besides that, Lukáshka and his mother, as near neighbours, often gave the old man wine, clotted cream, and other home produce which Eróshka did not possess. Daddy Eróshka, who all his life had allowed himself to get carried away, always explained his infatuations from a practical point of view. 'Well, why not?' he used to say to himself. 'I'll give them some fresh meat, or a bird, and they won't forget Daddy: they'll sometimes bring a cake or a piece of pie.'

'Good morning, Mark! I am glad to see you,' shouted the old man cheerfully, and quickly putting down his bare feet he jumped off his bed and walked a step or two along the creaking floor, looked down at his out-turned toes, and suddenly, amused by the appearance of his feet, smiled, stamped with his bare heel on the ground, stamped again, and then performed a funny dance-step. 'That's clever, eh?' he asked, his small eyes glistening. Lukáshka smiled faintly. 'Going back to the cordon?' asked the old man.

'I have brought the *chikhir* I promised you when we were at the cordon.'

'May Christ save you!' said the old man, and he took up the extremely wide trousers that were lying on the floor, and his *beshtmet*, put them on, fastened a strap round his waist, poured some water from an earthenware pot over his hands, wiped them on the old trousers, smoothed his beard with a bit of comb, and stopped in front of Lukáshka. 'Ready,' he said.

Lukáshka fetched a cup, wiped it and filled it with wine, and then handed it to the old man.

'Your health! To the Father and the Son!' said the old man, accepting the wine with solemnity. 'May you have what you desire, may you always be a hero, and obtain a cross.'

Lukáshka also drank a little after repeating a prayer, and then put the wine on the table. The old man rose and brought out some dried fish which he laid on the threshold, where he beat it with a stick to make it tender; then, having put it with his horny hands on a blue plate (his only one), he placed it on the table.

‘I have all I want. I have victuals, thank God!’ he said proudly. ‘Well and what of Mósev?’ he added.

Lukáshka, evidently wishing to know the old man’s opinion, told him how the officer had taken the gun from him.

‘Never mind the gun,’ said the old man. ‘If you don’t give the gun you will get no reward.’

‘But they say, Daddy, it’s little reward a fellow gets when he is not yet a mounted Cossack; and the gun is a fine one, a Crimean, worth eighty rubles.’

‘Eh, let it go! I had a dispute like that with an officer, he wanted my horse. “Give it me and you’ll be made a cornet,” says he. I wouldn’t, and I got nothing!’

‘Yes, Daddy, but you see I have to buy a horse; and they say you can’t get one the other side of the river under fifty rubles, and mother has not yet sold our wine.’

‘Eh, we didn’t bother,’ said the old man; ‘when Daddy Eróshka was your age he already stole herds of horses from the Nogáy folk and drove them across the Térekk. Sometimes we’d give a fine horse for a quart of vodka or a cloak.’

‘Why so cheap?’ asked Lukáshka.

‘You’re a fool, a fool, Mark,’ said the old man contemptuously. ‘Why, that’s what one steals for, so as not to be stingy! As for you, I suppose you haven’t so much as seen how one drives off a herd of horses? Why don’t you speak?’

‘What’s one to say, Daddy?’ replied Lukáshka.

'It seems we are not the same sort of men as you were.'

'You're a fool, Mark, a fool! "not the same sort of men!"' retorted the old man, mimicking the Cossack lad. 'I was not that sort of Cossack at your age.'

'How's that?' asked Lukáshka.

The old man shook his head contemptuously.

'Daddy Eróshka was *simple*; he did not grudge anything! That's why I was *kunak* with all Chéchnya. A *kunak* would come to visit me and I'd make him drunk with vodka and make him happy and put him to sleep with me, and when I went to see him I'd take him a present—a dagger! That's the way it is done, and not as you do nowadays: the only amusement lads have now is to crack seeds and spit out the shells!' the old man finished contemptuously, imitating the present-day Cossacks cracking seeds and spitting out the shells.

'Yes, I know,' said Lukáshka; 'that's so!'

'If you wish to be a fellow of the right sort, be a brave and not a peasant! Because even a peasant can buy a horse—pay the money and take the horse.'

They were silent for a while.

'Well of course it's dull both in the village and the cordon, Daddy: but there's nowhere one can go for a bit of sport. All our fellows are so timid. Take Nazárka. The other day when we went to the Tartar village, Giréy Khan asked us to come to Nogáy to take some horses, but no one went, and how was I to go alone?'

'And what of Daddy? Do you think I am quite dried up? . . . No, I'm not dried up. Let me have a horse and I'll be off to Nogáy at once.'

'What's the good of talking nonsense!' said Luke. 'You'd better tell me what to do about Giréy Khan. He says, "Only bring horses to the Térek, and then

even if you bring a whole stud I'll find a place for them." You see he's also a shaven-headed Tartar—how's one to believe him?"

'You may trust Giréy Khan, all his kin were good people. His father too was a faithful *kunak*. But listen to Daddy and I won't teach you wrong: make him take an oath, then it will be all right. And if you go with him, have your pistol ready all the same, especially when it comes to dividing up the horses. I was nearly killed that way once by a Chéchen. I wanted ten rubles from him for a horse. Trusting is all right, but don't go to sleep without a gun.'

Lukáshka listened attentively to the old man.

'I say, Daddy, have you any stone-break grass?' he asked after a pause.

'No, I haven't any, but I'll teach you how to get it. You're a good lad and won't forget the old man. . . . Shall I tell you?'

'Tell me, Daddy.'

'You know a tortoise? She's a devil, the tortoise is!'

'Of course I know!'

'Find her nest and fence it round so that she can't get in. Well, she'll come, go round it, and then will go off to find the stone-break grass and will bring some along and destroy the fence. Anyhow next morning come in good time, and where the fence is broken there you'll find the stone-break grass lying. Take it wherever you like. No lock and no bar will be able to stop you.'

'Have you tried it yourself, Daddy?'

'As for trying, I have not tried it, but I was told of it by good people. I used only one charm: that was to repeat the Pilgrim rhyme when mounting my horse; and no one ever killed me!'

'What is the Pilgrim rhyme, Daddy?'

'What, don't you know it? Oh, what people! You're right to ask Daddy. Well, listen, and repeat after me:

'Hail! Ye, living in Sion,
This is your King,
Our steeds we shall sit on,
Sophonius is weeping.
Zacharias is speaking,
Father Pilgrim,
Mankind ever loving.

'Kind ever loving,' the old man repeated. 'Do you know it now? Try it.'

Lukáshka laughed.

'Come, Daddy, was it that that hindered their killing you? Maybe it just happened so!'

'You've grown too clever! You learn it all, and say it. It will do you no harm. Well, suppose you have sung "Pilgrim" it's all right,' and the old man himself began laughing. 'But just one thing, Luke, don't you go to Nogáy!'

'Why?'

'Times have changed. You are not the same men. You've become rubbishy Cossacks! And see how many Russians have come down on us! You'd get to prison. Really, give it up! Just as if you could! Now Gírchik and I, we used . . .'

And the old man was about to begin one of his endless tales, but Lukáshka glanced at the window and interrupted him.

'It is quite light, Daddy. It's time to be off. Look us up some day.'

'May Christ save you! I'll go to the officer; I promised to take him out shooting. He seems a good fellow.'

CHAPTER XVII

FROM Eróshka's hut Lukáshka went home. As he returned, the dewy mists were rising from the ground and enveloped the village. In various places the cattle, though out of sight, could be heard beginning to stir. The cocks called to one another with increasing

frequency and insistence. The air was becoming more transparent, and the villagers were getting up. Not till he was close to it could Lukáshka discern the fence of his yard, all wet with dew, the porch of the hut, and the open shed. From the misty yard he heard the sound of an axe chopping wood. Lukáshka entered the hut. His mother was up, and stood at the oven throwing wood into it. His little sister was still lying in bed asleep.

'Well, Lukáshka, had enough holiday-making?' asked his mother softly. 'Where did you spend the night?'

'I was in the village,' replied her son reluctantly, reaching for his musket, which he drew from its cover and examined carefully.

His mother swayed her head.

Lukáshka poured a little gunpowder onto the pan, took out a little bag from which he drew some empty cartridge cases which he began filling, carefully plugging each one with a ball wrapped in a rag. Then, having tested the loaded cartridges with his teeth and examined them, he put down the bag.

'I say, Mother, I told you the bags wanted mending; have they been done?' he asked.

'Oh yes, our dumb girl was mending something last night. Why, is it time for you to be going back to the cordon? I haven't seen anything of you!'

'Yes, as soon as I have got ready I shall have to go,' answered Lukáshka, tying up the gunpowder. 'And where is our dumb one? Outside?'

'Chopping wood, I expect. She kept fretting for you. "I shall not see him at all!" she said. She puts her hand to her face like this, and clicks her tongue and presses her hands to her heart as much as to say—"sorry." Shall I call her in? She understood all about the *abrek*.'

'Call her,' said Lukáshka. 'And I had some tallow there; bring it: I must grease my sword.'

The old woman went out, and a few minutes later Lukáshka's dumb sister came up the creaking steps and entered the hut. She was six years older than her brother and would have been extremely like him had it not been for the dull and coarsely changeable expression (common to all deaf and dumb people) of her face. She wore a coarse smock all patched; her feet were bare and muddy, and on her head she had an old blue kerchief. Her neck, arms, and face were sinewy like a peasant's. Her clothing and her whole appearance indicated that she always did the hard work of a man. She brought in a heap of logs which she threw down by the oven. Then she went up to her brother, and with a joyful smile which made her whole face pucker up, touched him on the shoulder and began making rapid signs to him with her hands, her face, and whole body.

'That's right, that's right, Stěpka is a trump!' answered the brother, nodding. 'She's fetched every⁴ thing and mended everything, she's a trump! Here, take this for it!' He brought out two pieces of gingerbread from his pocket and gave them to her.

The dumb woman's face flushed with pleasure, and she began making a weird noise for joy. Having seized the gingerbread she began to gesticulate still more rapidly, frequently pointing in one direction and passing her thick finger over her eyebrows and her face. Lukáshka understood her and kept nodding, while he smiled slightly. She was telling him to give the girls dainties, and that the girls liked him, and that one girl, Maryánka—the best of them all—loved him. She indicated Maryánka by rapidly pointing in the direction of Maryánka's home and to her own eyebrows and face, and by smacking her lips and swaying her head. 'Loves' she expressed by pressing her hands to her breast, kissing her hand, and pretending to embrace someone. Their mother returned to the hut, and seeing what her dumb daughter was

saying, smiled and shook her head. Her daughter showed her the gingerbread and again made the noise which expressed joy.

'I told Ulítka the other day that I'd send a match-maker to them,' said the mother. 'She took my words well.'

Lukáshka looked silently at his mother.

'But how about selling the wine, mother? I need a horse.'

'I'll cart it when I have time. I must get the barrels ready,' said the mother, evidently not wishing her son to meddle in domestic matters. 'When you go out you'll find a bag in the passage. I borrowed from the neighbours and got something for you to take back to the cordon; or shall I put it in your saddle-bag?'

'All right,' answered Lukáshka. 'And if Giréy Khan should come across the river send him to me at the cordon, for I shan't get leave again for a long time now; I have some business with him.'

He began to get ready to start.

'I will send him on,' said the old woman. 'It seems you have been spreeing at Yámka's all the time. I went out in the night to see the cattle, and I think it was your voice I heard singing songs.'

Lukáshka did not reply, but went out into the passage, threw the bags over his shoulder, tucked up the skirts of his coat, took his musket, and then stopped for a moment on the threshold.

'Good-bye, mother!' he said as he closed the gate behind him. 'Send me a small barrel with Nazárka. I promised it to the lads, and he'll call for it.'

'May Christ keep you, Lukáshka. God be with you! I'll send you some, some from the new barrel,' said the old woman, going to the fence: 'But listen,' she added, leaning over the fence.

The Cossack stopped.

'You've been making merry here; well, that'n all

right. Why should not a young man amuse himself? God has sent you luck and that's good. But now look out and mind, my son. Don't you go and get into mischief. Above all, satisfy your superiors: one has to! And I will sell the wine and find money for a horse and will arrange a match with the girl for you.'

'All right, all right!' answered her son, frowning.

His deaf sister shouted to attract his attention. She pointed to her head and the palm of her hand, to indicate the shaved head of a Chéchen. Then she frowned, and pretending to aim with a gun, she shrieked and began rapidly humming and shaking her head. This meant that Lukáshka should kill another Chéchen.

Lukáshka understood. He smiled, and shifting the gun at his back under his cloak stepped lightly and rapidly, and soon disappeared in the thick mist.

The old woman, having stood a little while at the gate, returned silently to the hut and immediately began working.

• CHAPTER XVIII

LUKÁSHKA returned to the cordon and at the same time Daddy Eróshka whistled to his dogs and, climbing over his wattle fence, went to Olénin's lodging, passing by the back of the houses (he disliked meeting women before going out hunting or shooting). He found Olénin still asleep, and even Vanyúsha, though awake, was still in bed and looking round the room considering whether it was not time to get up, when Daddy Eróshka, gun on shoulder and in full hunter's trappings, opened the door.

'A cudgel!' he shouted in his deep voice, 'An alarm! The Chéchens are upon us! Iván! Get the samovar ready for your master, and get up yourself—quick!' cried the old man. 'That's our way, my good man! Why even the girls are already up! Look out of the

window. See, she's going for water and you're still sleeping!"

Olénin awoke and jumped up, feeling fresh and light-hearted at the sight of the old man and at the sound of his voice.

'Quick, Vanyúsha, quick!' he cried.

'Is that the way you go hunting?' said the old man. 'Others are having their breakfast and you are asleep! Lyam! Here!' he called to his dog. 'Is your gun ready?' he shouted, as loud as if a whole crowd were in the hut.

'Well, it's true I'm guilty, but it can't be helped! The powder, Vanyúsha, and the wads!' said Olénin.

'A fine!' shouted the old man.

'*Du tay vouldy vou?*' asked Vanyúsha, grinning.

'You're not one of us—your gabble is not like our speech, you devil!' the old man shouted at Vanyúsha, showing the stumps of his teeth.

'A first offence must be forgiven,' said Olénin playfully, drawing on his high boots.

'The first offence shall be forgiven,' answered Eróshka, 'but if you oversleep another time you'll be fined a pail of *chikhir*. When it gets warmer you won't find the deer.'

'And even if we do find him he is wiser than we are,' said Olénin, repeating the words spoken by the old man the evening before, 'and you can't deceive him!'

'Yes, laugh away! You kill one first, and then you may talk. Now then, hurry up! Look, there's the master himself coming to see you,' added Eróshka, looking out of the window. 'Just see how he's got himself up. He's put on a new coat so that you should see that he's an officer. Ah, these people, these people!'

Sure enough, Vanyúsha came in and announced that the master of the house wished to see Olénin.

'*L'arjan!*' he remarked profoundly, to forewarn his

master of the meaning of this visitation. Following him, the master of the house in a new Circassian coat with an officer's stripes on the shoulders and with polished boots (quite exceptional among Cossacks) entered the room, swaying from side to side and congratulated his lodger on his safe arrival.

The cornet, Elias Vasilich, was an *educated* Cossack. He had been to Russia proper, was a regimental school-teacher, and above all he was noble. He wished to appear noble, but one could not help feeling that beneath his grotesque pretence of polish, his affectation, his self-confidence, and his absurd way of speaking, he was just the same as Daddy Eróshka. This could also be clearly seen by his sun-burnt face and his hands and his red nose. Olénin asked him to sit down.

'Good morning, Father Elias Vasilich,' said Eróshka, rising with (or so it seemed to Olénin) an ironically low bow.

'Good morning, Daddy. So you're here already,' said the cornet, with a careless nod.

The cornet was a man of about forty, with a grey pointed beard, skinny and lean, but handsome and very fresh-looking for his age. Having come to see Olénin he was evidently afraid of being taken for an ordinary Cossack, and wanted to let Olénin feel his importance from the first.

'That's our Egyptian Nimrod,' he remarked, addressing Olénin and pointing to the old man with a self-satisfied smile. 'A mighty hunter before the Lord! He's our foremost man on every hand. You've already been pleased to get acquainted with him.'

Daddy Eróshka gazed at his feet in their shoes of wet raw hide and shook his head thoughtfully at the cornet's ability and learning, and muttered to himself: 'Gyptian Nimvrod! What things he invents!'

'Yes, you see we mean to go hunting,' answered Olénin.

'Yes, sir, exactly,' said the cornet, 'but I have a small business with you.'

'What do you want?'

'Seeing that you are a gentleman,' began the cornet, 'and as I may understand myself to be in the rank of an officer too, and therefore we may always progressively negotiate, as gentlemen do' (he stopped and looked with a smile at Olénin and at the old man). 'But if you have the desire with my consent, then, as my wife is a foolish woman of our class, she could not quite comprehend your words of yesterday's date. Therefore my quarters might be let for six rubles to the Regimental Adjutant, without the stables; but I can always avert that from myself free of charge. But, as you desire, therefore I, being myself of an officer's rank, can come to an agreement with you in everything personally, as an inhabitant of this district, not according to our customs, but can maintain the conditions in every way. . . .'

'Speaks clearly!' muttered the old man.

The cornet continued in the same strain for a long time. At last, not without difficulty, Olénin gathered that the cornet wished to let his rooms to him, Olénin, for six rubles a month. The latter gladly agreed to this, and offered his visitor a glass of tea. The cornet declined it.

'According to our silly custom we consider it a sort of sin to drink out of a "worldly" tumbler,' he said. 'Though, of course, with my education I may understand, but my wife from her human weakness . . .'

'Well then, will you have some tea?'

'If you will permit me, I will bring my own particular glass,' answered the cornet, and stepped out into the porch. 'Bring me my glass!' he cried.

In a few minutes the door opened and a young sunburnt arm in a print sleeve thrust itself in, holding a tumbler in the hand. The cornet went up, took it, and whispered something to his daughter. Olénin

poured tea for the cornet into the latter's own 'particular' glass, and for Eróshka into a 'worldly' glass.

'However, I do not desire to detain you,' said the cornet, scalding his lips and emptying his tumbler. 'I too have a great liking for fishing, and I am here, so to say, only on leave of absence for recreation from my duties. I too have the desire to tempt fortune and see whether some *Gifts of the Terek*¹ may not fall to my share. I hope you too will come and see us and have a drink of our wine, according to the custom of our village,' he added.

The cornet bowed, shook hands with Olénin, and went out. While Olénin was getting ready, he heard the cornet giving orders to his family in an authoritative and sensible tone, and a few minutes later he saw him pass by the window in a tattered coat with his trousers rolled up to his knees and a fishing net over his shoulder.

'A rascal!' said Daddy Eróshka, emptying his 'worldly' tumbler. 'And will you really pay him six rubles? Was such a thing ever heard of? They would let you the best hut in the village for two rubles. What a beast! Why, I'd let you have mine for three!'

'No, I'll remain here,' said Olénin.

'Six rubles! . . . Clearly it's a fool's money. Eh, eh, eh!' answered the old man. 'Let's have some *chikhir*, Iván!'

Having had a snack and a drink of vodka to prepare themselves for the road, Olénin and the old man went out together before eight o'clock.

At the gate they came up against a wagon to which a pair of oxen were harnessed. With a white kerchief tied round her head down to her eyes, a coat over her smock, and wearing high boots, Maryánka with a long switch in her hand was dragging the oxen by a cord tied to their horns.

¹ The name of a poem by Lérmontov.

'Mammy,' said the old man, pretending that he was going to seize her.

Maryánka flourished her switch at him and glanced merrily at them both with her beautiful eyes.

Olénin felt still more light-hearted.

'Now then, come on, come on,' he said, throwing his gun on his shoulder and conscious of the girl's eyes upon him.

'Gee up!' sounded Maryánka's voice behind them, followed by the creak of the moving wagon.

As long as their road lay through the pastures at the back of the village Eróshka went on talking. He could not forget the cornet and kept on abusing him.

'Why are you so angry with him?' asked Olénin.

'He's stingy. I don't like it,' answered the old man. 'He'll leave it all behind when he dies! Then who's he saving up for? He's built two houses, and he's got a second garden from his brother by a law-suit. And in the matter of papers what a dog he is! They come to him from other villages to fill up documents. As he writes it out, exactly so it happens. He gets it quite exact. But who is he saving for? He's only got one boy and the girl; when she's married who'll be left?'

'Well then, he's saving up for her dowry,' said Olénin.

'What dowry? The girl is sought after, she's a fine girl. But he's such a devil that he must yet marry her to a rich fellow. He wants to get a big price for her. There's Luke, a Cossack, a neighbour and a nephew of mine, a fine lad. It's he who killed the Chéchen—he has been wooing her for a long time, but he hasn't let him have her. He's given one excuse, and another, and a third. "The girl's too young," he says. But I know what he is thinking. He wants to keep them bowing to him. He's been acting shamefully about that girl. Still, they will get her for Lukáshka, because he is the best Cossack in the village,

a brave, who has killed an *abrek* and will be rewarded with a cross.'

'But how about this? When I was walking up and down the yard last night, I saw my landlord's daughter and some Cossack kissing,' said Olénin.

'You're pretending!' cried the old man, stopping.

'On my word,' said Olénin.

'Women are the devil,' said Eróshka pondering. 'But what Cossack was it?'

'I couldn't see.'

'Well, what sort of a cap had he, a white one?'

'Yes.'

'And a red coat? About your height?'

'No, a bit taller.'

'It's he!' and Eróshka burst out laughing. 'It's himself, it's Mark. He is Luke, but I call him Mark for a joke. His very self! I love him. I was just such a one myself. What's the good of minding them? My sweetheart used to sleep with her mother and her sister-in-law, but I managed to get in. She used to sleep upstairs; that witch her mother was a regular demon; it's awful how she hated me. Well, I used to come with a chum, Gírchik his name was. We'd come under her window and I'd climb on his shoulders, push up the window and begin groping about. She used to sleep just there on a bench. Once I woke her up and she nearly called out. She hadn't recognized me. "Who is there?" she said and I could not answer. Her mother was even beginning to stir, but I took off my cap and shoved it over her mouth; and she at once knew it by a seam in it, and ran out to me. I used not to want anything then. She'd bring along clotted cream and grapes and everything,' added Eróshka (who always explained things practically), 'and she wasn't the only one. It was a life!'

'And what now?'

'Now we'll follow the dog, get a pheasant to settle on a tree, and then you may fire.'

'Would you have made up to Maryánka?'

'Attend to the dogs. I'll tell you to-night,' said the old man, pointing to his favourite dog, Lyam.

After a pause they continued talking, while they went about a hundred paces. Then the old man stopped again and pointed to a twig that lay across the path.

'What do you think of that?' he said. 'You think it's nothing? It's bad that this stick is lying so.'

'Why is it bad?'

He smiled.

'Ah, you don't know anything. Just listen to me. When a stick lies like that don't you step across it, but go round it or throw it off the path this way, and say "Father and Son and Holy Ghost," and then go on with God's blessing. Nothing will happen to you. That's what the old men used to teach me.'

'Come, what rubbish!' said Olénin. 'You'd better tell me more about Maryánka. Does she carry on with Lukáshka?'

'Hush, . . . be quiet now!' the old man again interrupted in a whisper: 'just listen, we'll go round through the forest.'

And the old man, stepping quietly in his soft shoes, led the way by a narrow path leading into the dense, wild, overgrown forest. Now and again with a frown he turned to look at Olénin, who rustled and clattered with his heavy boots and, carrying his gun carelessly, several times caught the twigs of trees that grew across the path.

'Don't make a noise. Step softly, soldier!' the old man whispered angrily.

There was a feeling in the air that the sun had risen. The mist was dissolving but it still enveloped the tops of the trees. The forest looked terribly high. At every step the aspect changed: what had appeared like a tree proved to be a bush, and a reed looked like a tree.

CHAPTER XIX

[THE mist had partly lifted, showing the wet reed thatches, and was now turning into dew that moistened the road and the grass beside the fence. Smoke rose everywhere in clouds from the chimneys. The people were going out of the village, some to their work, some to the river, and some to the cordon. The hunters walked together along the damp, grass-grown path. The dogs, wagging their tails and looking at their masters, ran on both sides of them. Myriads of gnats hovered in the air and pursued the hunters, covering their backs, eyes, and hands. The air was fragrant with the grass and with the dampness of the forest. Olénin continually looked round at the ox-cart in which Maryánka sat urging on the oxen with a long switch.]

It was calm. The sounds from the village, audible at first, now no longer reached the sportsmen. Only the brambles cracked as the dogs ran under them, and now and then birds called to one another. Olénin knew that danger lurked in the forest, that *abreks* always hid in such places. But he knew too that in the forest, for a man on foot, a gun is a great protection. Not that he was afraid, but he felt that another in his place might be; and looking into the damp misty forest and listening to the rare and faint sounds with strained attention, he changed his hold on his gun and experienced a pleasant feeling that was new to him. Daddy Eróshka went in front, stopping and carefully scanning every puddle where an animal had left a double track, and pointing it out to Olénin. He hardly spoke at all and only occasionally made remarks in a whisper. The track they were following had once been made by wagons, but the grass had long overgrown it. The elm and plane-tree forest on both sides of them was so dense and overgrown with creepers that it was impossible to see

anything through it. Nearly every tree was enveloped from top to bottom with wild grape vines, and dark bramble bushes covered the ground thickly. Every little glade was overgrown with blackberry bushes and grey feathery reeds. In places, large hoof-prints and small funnel-shaped pheasant-trails led from the path into the thicket. The vigour of the growth of this forest, untrampled by cattle, struck Olénin at every turn, for he had never seen anything like it. This forest, the danger, the old man and his mysterious whispering, Maryánka with her virile upright bearing, and the mountains—all this seemed to him like a dream.

‘A pheasant has settled,’ whispered the old man, looking round and pulling his cap over his face—‘Cover your mug! A pheasant!’ he waved his arm angrily at Olénin and pushed forward almost on all fours. ‘He don’t like a man’s mug.’

Olénin was still behind him when the old man stopped and began examining a tree. A cock-pheasant on the tree clucked at the dog that was barking at it, and Olénin saw the pheasant; but at that moment a report, as of a cannon, came from Eróshka’s enormous gun, the bird fluttered up and, losing some feathers, fell to the ground. Coming up to the old man Olénin disturbed another, and raising his gun he aimed and fired. The pheasant flew swiftly up and then, catching at the branches as he fell, dropped like a stone to the ground.

‘Good man!’ the old man (who could not hit a flying bird) shouted laughing.

Having picked up the pheasants they went on. Olénin, excited by the exercise and the praise, kept addressing remarks to the old man.

‘Stop! Come this way,’ the old man interrupted. ‘I noticed the track of deer here yesterday.’

After they had turned into the thicket and gone some three hundred paces they scrambled through

into a glade overgrown with reeds and partly under water. Olénin failed to keep up with the old huntsman and presently Daddy Eróshka, some twenty paces in front, stooped down, nodding and beckoning with his arm. On coming up with him Olénin saw a man's footprint to which the old man was pointing.

'D'you see?'

'Yes, well?' said Olénin, trying to speak as calmly as he could. 'A man's footstep!'

Involuntarily a thought of Cooper's *Pathfinder* and of *abreks* flashed through Olénin's mind, but noticing the mysterious manner with which the old man moved on, he hesitated to question him and remained in doubt whether this mysteriousness was caused by fear of danger or by the sport.

'No, it's my own footprint,' the old man said quietly, and pointed to some grass under which the track of an animal was just perceptible.

The old man went on, and Olénin kept up with him. Descending to lower ground some twenty paces farther on they came upon a spreading pear-tree, under which, on the black earth, lay the fresh dung of some animal.

The spot, all covered over with wild vines, was like a cosy arbour, dark and cool.

'He's been here this morning,' said the old man with a sigh; 'the lair is still damp, quite fresh.'

Suddenly they heard a terrible crash in the forest some ten paces from where they stood. They both started and seized their guns, but they could see nothing and only heard the branches breaking. The rhythmical rapid thud of galloping was heard for a moment and then changed into a hollow rumble which resounded farther and farther off, re-echoing in wider and wider circles through the forest. Olénin felt as though something had snapped in his heart. He peered carefully but vainly into the green thicket and then turned to the old man. Daddy Eróshka with his

gun pressed to his breast stood motionless; his cap was thrust backwards, his eyes gleamed with an unwonted glow, and his open mouth, with its worn yellow teeth, seemed to have stiffened in that position.

'A horned stag!' he muttered, and throwing down his gun in despair he began pulling at his grey beard. 'Here it stood. We should have come round by the path. . . . Fool! fool!' and he gave his beard an angry tug. 'Fool! Pig!' he repeated, pulling painfully at his own beard. Through the forest something seemed to fly away in the mist, and ever farther and farther off was heard the sound of the flight of the stag.

It was already dusk when, hungry, tired, but full of vigour, Olénin returned with the old man. Dinner was ready. He ate and drank with the old man till he felt warm and merry. Olénin then went out into the porch. Again, to the west, the mountains rose before his eyes. Again the old man told his endless stories of hunting, of *abreks*, of sweethearts, and of all that free and reckless life. Again the fair Maryánka went in and out and across the yard, her beautiful powerful form outlined by her smock.

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CHAPTER XX

THE next day Olénin went alone to the spot where he and the old man had startled the stag. Instead of passing round through the gate he climbed over the prickly hedge, as everybody else did, and before he had had time to pull out the thorns that had caught in his coat, his dog, which had run on in front, started two pheasants. He had hardly stepped among the briers when the pheasants began to rise at every step (the old man had not shown him that place the day before as he meant to keep it for shooting from behind the screen). Olénin fired twelve times and killed five pheasants, but clambering after them through the briers he got so fatigued that he was drenched with

perspiration. He called off his dog, uncocked his gun, put in a bullet above the small shot, and brushing away the mosquitoes with the wide sleeve of his Circassian coat he went slowly to the spot where they had been the day before. It was however impossible to keep back the dog, who found trails on the very path, and Olénin killed two more pheasants, so that after being detained by this it was getting towards noon before he began to find the place he was looking for.

The day was perfectly clear, calm, and hot. The morning moisture had dried up even in the forest, and myriads of mosquitoes literally covered his face, his back, and his arms. His dog had turned from black to grey, its back being covered with mosquitoes, and so had Olénin's coat through which the insects thrust their stings. Olénin was ready to run away from them and it seemed to him that it was impossible to live in this country in the summer. He was about to go home, but remembering that other people managed to endure such pain he resolved to bear it and gave himself up to be devoured. And strange to say, by noon~~time~~ the feeling became actually pleasant. He even felt that without this mosquito-filled atmosphere around him, and that mosquito-paste mingled with perspiration which his hand smeared over his face, and that unceasing irritation all over his body, the forest would lose for him some of its character and charm. These myriads of insects were so well suited to that monstrously lavish wild vegetation, these multitudes of birds and beasts which filled the forest, this dark foliage, this hot scented air, these runlets filled with turbid water which everywhere soaked through from the Terek and gurgled here and there under the overhanging leaves, that the very thing which had ~~at~~ first seemed to him dreadful and intolerable now seemed pleasant. After going round the place where yesterday they had found the animal

buzzed: 'This way, this way, lads! Here's some one we can eat!' They buzzed and stuck to him. And it was clear to him that he was not a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so, but just such a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer, as those that were now living all around him. 'Just as they, just as Daddy Eróshka, I shall live awhile and die, and as he says truly: "grass will grow and nothing more".'

'But what though the grass does grow?' he continued thinking, 'Still I must live and be happy, because happiness is all I desire. Never mind what I am—an animal like all the rest, above whom the grass will grow and nothing more; or a frame in which a bit of the one God has been set,—still I must live in the very best way. How then must I live to be happy, and why was I not happy before?' And he began to recall his former life and he felt disgusted with himself. He appeared to himself to have been terribly exacting and selfish, though he now saw that all the while he really needed nothing for himself. And he looked round at the foliage with the light shining through it, at the setting sun and the clear sky, and he felt just as happy as before. 'Why am I happy, and what used I to live for?' thought he. 'How much I exacted for myself; how I schemed and did not manage to gain anything but shame and sorrow! and, there now, I require nothing to be happy;' and suddenly a new light seemed to reveal itself to him. 'Happiness is this!' he said to himself, 'Happiness lies in living for others. That is evident. The desire for happiness is innate in every man; therefore it is legitimate. When trying to satisfy it selfishly—that is, by seeking for oneself riches, fame, comforts, or love—it may happen that circumstances arise which make it impossible to satisfy these desires. It follows that it is these desires that are illegitimate, but not the need for happiness. But what desires can

and not finding anything, he felt inclined to rest. The sun stood right above the forest and poured its perpendicular rays down on his back and head whenever he came out into a glade or onto the road. The seven heavy pheasants dragged painfully at his waist. Having found the traces of yesterday's stag he crept under a bush into the thicket just where the stag had lain, and lay down in its lair. He examined the dark foliage around him, the place marked by the stag's perspiration and yesterday's dung, the imprint of the stag's knees, the bit of black earth it had kicked up, and his own footprints of the day before. He felt cool and comfortable and did not think of or wish for anything. And suddenly he was overcome by such a strange feeling of causeless joy and of love for everything, that from an old habit of his childhood he began crossing himself and thanking someone. Suddenly, with extraordinary clearness, he thought: 'Here am I, Dmítri Olénin, a being quite distinct from every other being, now lying all alone Heaven only knows where—where a stag used to live—an old stag, a beautiful stag who perhaps had never seen a man, and in a place where no human being has ever sat or thought these thoughts. Here I sit, and around me stand old and young trees, one of them festooned with wild grape vines, and pheasants are fluttering, driving one another about and perhaps scenting their murdered brothers.' He felt his pheasants, examined them, and wiped the warm blood off his hand onto his coat. 'Perhaps the jackals scent them and with dissatisfied faces go off in another direction: above me, flying in among the leaves which to them seem enormous islands, mosquitoes hang in the air and buzz: one, two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, a million mosquitoes, and all of them buzz something or other and each one of them is separate from all else and is just such a separate Dmítri Olénin as I am myself.' He vividly imagined what the mosquitoes

always be satisfied despite external circumstances? What are they? Love, self-sacrifice.' He was so glad and excited when he had discovered this, as it seemed to him, new truth, that he jumped up and began impatiently seeking some one to sacrifice himself for, to do good to and to love. 'Since one wants nothing for oneself,' he kept thinking, 'why not live for others?' He took up his gun with the intention of returning home quickly to think this out and to find an opportunity of going good. He made his way out of the thicket. When he had come out into the glade he looked around him; the sun was no longer visible above the tree-tops. It had grown cooler and the place seemed to him quite strange and not like the country round the village. Everything seemed changed—the weather and the character of the forest; the sky was wrapped in clouds, the wind was rustling in the tree-tops, and all around nothing was visible but reeds and dying broken-down trees. He called to his dog who had run away to follow some animal, and his voice came back as in a desert. And suddenly he was seized with a terrible sense of weirdness. He grew frightened. He remembered the *abreks* and the murders he had been told about, and he expected every moment that an *abrek* would spring from behind every bush and he would have to defend his life and die, or be a coward. He thought of God and of the future life as for long he had not thought about them. And all around was that same gloomy stern wild nature. 'And is it worth while living for oneself,' thought he, 'when at any moment you may die, and die without having done any good, and so that no one will know of it?' He went in the direction where he fancied the village lay. Of his shooting he had no further thought; but he felt tired to death and peered round at every bush and tree with particular attention and almost with terror, expecting every moment to be called to account for his life. After having wan-

dered about for a considerable time he came upon a ditch down which was flowing cold sandy water from the Terek, and, not to go astray any longer, he decided to follow it. He went on without knowing where the ditch would lead him. Suddenly the reeds behind him crackled. He shuddered and seized his gun, and then felt ashamed of himself: the over-excited dog, panting hard, had thrown itself into the cold water of the ditch and was lapping it!

He too had a drink, and then followed the dog in the direction it wished to go, thinking it would lead him to the village. But despite the dog's company everything around him seemed still more dreary. The forest grew darker and the wind grew stronger and stronger in the tops of the broken old trees. Some large birds circled screeching round their nests in those trees. The vegetation grew poorer and he came oftener and oftener upon rustling reeds and bare sandy spaces covered with animal footprints. To the howling of the wind was added another kind of cheerless monotonous roar. Altogether his spirits became gloomy. Putting his hand behind him he felt his pheasants, and found one missing. It had broken off and was lost, and only the bleeding head and beak remained sticking in his belt. He felt more frightened than he had ever done before. He began to pray to God, and feared above all that he might die without having done anything good or kind; and he so wanted to live, and to live so as to perform a feat of self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXI

SUDDENLY it was as though the sun had shone into his soul. He heard Russian being spoken, and also heard the rapid smooth flow of the Terek, and a few steps farther in front of him saw the brown moving surface of the river, with the dim-coloured wet sand of its banks and shallows, the distant steppe, the

cordon watch-tower outlined above the water, a saddled and hobbled horse among the brambles, and then the mountains opening out before him. The red sun appeared for an instant from under a cloud and its last rays glittered brightly along the river over the reeds, on the watch-tower, and on a group of Cossacks, among whom Lukáška's vigorous figure attracted Olénin's involuntary attention.

Olénin felt that he was again, without any apparent cause, perfectly happy. He had come upon the Nízhni-Protótsk post on the Téreks, opposite a pro-Russian Tartar village on the other side of the river. He accosted the Cossacks, but not finding as yet any excuse for doing anyone a kindness, he entered the hut; nor in the hut did he find any such opportunity. The Cossacks received him coldly. On entering the mud hut he lit a cigarette. The Cossacks paid little attention to him, first because he was smoking a cigarette, and secondly because they had something else to divert them that evening. Some hostile Chéchens, relatives of the *abrek* who had been killed, had come from the hills with a scout to ransom the body; and the Cossacks were waiting for their Commanding Officer's arrival from the village. The dead man's brother, tall and well shaped with a short cropped beard which was dyed red, despite his very tattered coat and cap was calm and majestic as a king. His face was very like that of the dead *abrek*. He did not deign to look at anyone and never once glanced at the dead body, but sitting on his heels in the shade he spat as he smoked his short pipe, and occasionally uttered some few guttural sounds of command, which were respectfully listened to by his companion. He was evidently a brave who had met Russians more than once before in quite other circumstances, and nothing about them could astonish or even interest him. Olénin was about to approach the dead body and had begun to look at it when the brother, looking

up at him from under his brows with calm contempt, said something sharply and angrily. The scout hastened to cover the dead man's face with his coat. Olénin was struck by the dignified and stern expression of the brave's face. He began to speak to him, asking from what village he came, but the Chéchen, scarcely giving him a glance, spat contemptuously and turned away. Olénin was so surprised at the Chéchen not being interested in him that he could only put it down to the man's stupidity or ignorance of Russian; so he turned to the scout, who also acted as interpreter. The scout was as ragged as the other, but instead of being red haired he was black haired, restless, with extremely white gleaming teeth and sparkling black eyes. The scout willingly entered into conversation and asked for a cigarette.

'There were five brothers,' began the scout in his broken Russian. 'This is the third brother the Russians have killed, only two are left. He is a brave, a great brave!' he said, pointing to the Chéchen. 'When they killed Ahmet Khan (the dead brave) this one was sitting on the opposite bank among the reeds. He saw it all. Saw him laid in the skiff and brought to the bank. He sat there till the night and wished to kill the old man, but the others would not let him.'

Lukáshka went up to the speaker, and sat down.

'Of what village?' asked he.

'From there in the hills,' replied the scout, pointing to the misty bluish gorge beyond the Térek. 'Do you know Suuk-su? It is about eight miles beyond that.'

'Do you know Giréy Khan in Suuk-su?' asked Lukáshka, evidently proud of the acquaintance. 'He is my *kunak*.'

'He is my neighbour,' answered the scout.

'He's a trump!' and Lukáshka, evidently much interested, began talking to the scout in Tartar.

Presently a Cossack captain, with the head of the village, arrived on horseback with a suite of two Cossacks. The captain—one of the new type of Cossack officers—wished the Cossacks ‘Good health,’ but no one shouted in reply, ‘Hail! Good health to your honour,’ as is customary in the Russian Army, and only a few replied with a bow. Some, and among them Lukáshka, rose and stood erect. The corporal replied that all was well at the outposts. All this seemed ridiculous: it was as if these Cossacks were playing at being soldiers. But these formalities soon gave place to ordinary ways of behaviour, and the captain, who was a smart Cossack just like the others, began speaking fluently in Tartar to the interpreter. They filled in some document, gave it to the scout, and received from him some money. Then they approached the body.

‘Which of you is Luke Gavrílov?’ asked the captain.

Lukáshka took off his cap and came forward.

‘I have reported your exploit to the Commander. I don’t know what will come of it. I have recommended you for a cross; you’re too young to be made a sergeant. Can you read?’

‘I can’t.’

‘But what a fine fellow to look at!’ said the captain, again playing the commander. ‘Put on your cap. Which of the Gavrilovs does he come of? . . . the Broad, eh?’

‘His nephew,’ replied the corporal.

‘I know, I know. Well, lend a hand, help them,’ he said, turning to the Cossacks.

Lukáshka’s face shone with joy and seemed handsomer than usual. He moved away from the corporal, and having put on his cap sat down beside Olénin.

When the body had been carried to the skiff the brother Chéchen descended to the bank. The Cossacks involuntarily stepped aside to let him pass. He jumped into the boat and pushed off from the

bank with his powerful leg, and now, as Olénin noticed, for the first time threw a rapid glance at all the Cossacks and then abruptly asked his companion a question. The latter answered something and pointed to Lukáshka. The Chéchen looked at him and, turning slowly away, gazed at the opposite bank. That look expressed not hatred but cold contempt. He again made some remark.

‘What is he saying?’ Olénin asked of the fidgety scout.

‘Yours kill ours, ours slay yours. It’s always the same,’ replied the scout, evidently inventing, and he smiled, showing his white teeth, as he jumped into the skiff.

The dead man’s brother sat motionless, gazing at the opposite bank. He was so full of hatred and contempt that there was nothing on this side of the river that moved his curiosity. The scout, standing up at one end of the skiff and dipping his paddle now on one side now on the other, steered skilfully while talking incessantly. The skiff became smaller and smaller as it moved obliquely across the stream, the voices became scarcely audible, and at last, still within sight, they landed on the opposite bank where their horses stood waiting. There they lifted out the corpse and (though the horse shied) laid it across one of the saddles, mounted, and rode at a foot-pace along the road past a Tartar village from which a crowd came out to look at them. The Cossacks on the Russian side of the river were highly satisfied and jovial. Laughter and jokes were heard on all sides. The captain and the head of the village entered the mud hut to regale themselves. Lukáshka, vainly striving to impart a sedate expression to his merry face, sat down with his elbows on his knees beside Olénin and whittled away at a stick.

‘Why do you smoke?’ he said with assumed curiosity. ‘Is it good?’

He evidently spoke because he noticed Olénin felt ill at ease and isolated among the Cossacks.

'It's just a habit,' answered Olénin. 'Why?'

'H'm, if one of us were to smoke there would be a row! Look there now, the mountains are not far off,' continued Lukáshka, 'yet you can't get there! How will you get back alone? It's getting dark. I'll take you, if you like. You ask the corporal to give me leave.'

'What a fine fellow!' thought Olénin, looking at the Cossack's bright face. He remembered Maryánka and the kiss he had heard by the gate, and he was sorry for Lukáshka and his want of culture. 'What confusion it is,' he thought. 'A man kills another and is happy and satisfied with himself as if he had done something excellent. Can it be that nothing tells him that it is not a reason for any rejoicing, and that happiness lies not in killing, but in sacrificing oneself?'

'Well, you had better not meet him again now, mate!' said one of the Cossacks who had seen the skiff off, addressing Lukáshka. 'Did you hear him asking about you?'

Lukáshka raised his head.

'My godson?' said Lukáshka, meaning by that word the dead Chéchen.

'Your godson won't rise, but the red one is the godson's brother!'

'Let him thank God that he got off whole himself,' replied Lukáshka.

'What are you glad about?' asked Olénin. 'Supposing your brother had been killed would you be glad?'

The Cossack looked at Olénin with laughing eyes. He seemed to have understood all that Olénin wished to say to him, but to be above such considerations.

'Well, that happens too! Don't our fellows get killed sometimes?'

CHAPTER XXII

THE captain and the head of the village rode away, and Olénin, to please Lukáshka as well as to avoid going back alone through the dark forest, asked the corporal to give Lukáshka leave, and the corporal did so. Olénin thought that Lukáshka wanted to see Maryánka and he was also glad of the companionship of such a pleasant-looking and sociable Cossack. Lukáshka and Maryánka he involuntarily united in his mind, and he found pleasure in thinking about them. 'He loves Maryánka,' thought Olénin, 'and I could love her,' and a new and powerful emotion of tenderness overcame him as they walked homewards together through the dark forest. Lukáshka too felt happy; something akin to love made itself felt between these two very different young men. Every time they glanced at one another they wanted to laugh.

'By which gate do you enter?' asked Olénin.

'By the middle one. But I'll see you as far as the marsh. After that you have nothing to fear.'

Olénin laughed.

'Do you think I am afraid? Go back, and thank you. I can get on alone.'

'It's all right! What have I to do? And how can you help being afraid? Even we are afraid,' said Lukáshka to set Olénin's self-esteem at rest, and he laughed too.

'Then come in with me. We'll have a talk and a drink and in the morning you can go back.'

'Couldn't I find a place to spend the night?' laughed Lukáshka. 'But the corporal asked me to go back.'

'I heard you singing last night, and also saw you.'

'Every one . . .' and Luke swayed his head.

'Is it true you are getting married?' asked Olénin.

'Mother wants me to marry. But I have not got a horse yet.'

'Aren't you in the regular service?'

'Oh dear no! I've only just joined, and have not got a horse yet, and don't know how to get one. That's why the marriage does not come off.'

'And what would a horse cost?'

'We were bargaining for one beyond the river the other day and they would not take sixty rubles for it, though it is a Nogáy horse.'

'Will you come and be my drabánt?' (A drabánt was a kind of orderly attached to an officer when campaigning.) 'I'll get it arranged and will give you a horse,' said Olénin suddenly. 'Really now, I have two and I don't want both.'

'How—don't want it?' Lukáshka said, laughing. 'Why should you make me a present? We'll get on by ourselves by God's help.'

'No, really! Or don't you want to be a drabánt?' said Olénin, glad that it had entered his head to give a horse to Lukáshka, though, without knowing why, he felt uncomfortable and confused and did not know what to say when he tried to speak.

Lukáshka was the first to break the silence.

'Have you a house of your own in Russia?' he asked.

Olénin could not refrain from replying that he had not only one, but several houses.

'A good house? Bigger than ours?' asked Lukáshka good-naturedly.

'Much bigger; ten times as big and three stories high,' replied Olénin.

'And have you horses such as ours?'

'I have a hundred horses, worth three or four hundred rubles each, but they are not like yours. They are trotters, you know. . . . But still, I like the horses here best.'

'Well and did you come here of your own free will, or were you sent?' said Lukáshka, laughing at him. 'Look! that's where you lost your way,' he added, 'you should have turned to the right.'

'I came by my own wish,' replied Olénin. 'I wanted to see your parts and to join some expeditions.'

'I would go on an expedition any day,' said Lukáshka. 'D'you hear the jackals howling?' he added, listening.

'I say, don't you feel any horror at having killed a man?' asked Olénin.

'What's there to be frightened about? But I should like to join an expedition,' Lukáshka repeated. 'How I want to! How I want to!'

'Perhaps we may be going together. Our company is going before the holidays, and your "hundred" too.'

'And what did you want to come here for? You've a house and horses and serfs. In your place I'd do nothing but make merry! And what is your rank?'

'I am a cadet, but have been recommended for a commission.'

'Well, if you're not bragging about your home, if I were you I'd never have left it! Yes, I'd never have gone away anywhere. Do you find it pleasant living among us?'

'Yes, very pleasant,' answered Olénin.

It had grown quite dark before, talking in this way, they approached the village. They were still surrounded by the deep gloom of the forest. The wind howled through the tree-tops. The jackals suddenly seemed to be crying close beside them, howling, chuckling, and sobbing; but ahead of them in the village the sounds of women's voices and the barking of dogs could already be heard; the outlines of the huts were clearly to be seen; lights gleamed and the air was filled with the peculiar smell of *kizyak* smoke. Olénin felt keenly, that night especially, that here in this village was his home, his family, all his happiness, and that he never had and never would live so happily anywhere as he did in this Cossack village. He was so fond of everybody and especially of Lukáshka that night. On reaching home, to Lukáshka's great

surprise, Olénin with his own hands led out of the shed a horse he had bought in Gróznœ—it was not the one he usually rode but another—not a bad horse though no longer young, and gave it to Lukáshka.

‘Why should you give me a present?’ said Lukáshka, ‘I have not yet done anything for you.’

‘Really it is nothing,’ answered Olénin. ‘Take it, and you will give me a present, and we’ll go on an expedition against the enemy together.’

Lukáshka became confused.

‘But what d’you mean by it? As if a horse were of little value,’ he said without looking at the horse.

‘Take it, take it! If you don’t you will offend me. Vanyúsha! Take the grey horse to his house.’

Lukáshka took hold of the halter.

‘Well then, thank you! This is something unexpected, undreamt of.’

Olénin was as happy as a boy of twelve.

‘Tie it up here. It’s a good horse. I bought it in Gróznœ; it gallops splendidly! Vanyúsha, bring us some *chikhir*. Come into the hut.’

The wine was brought. Lukáshka sat down and took the wine-bowl.

‘God willing I’ll find a way to repay you,’ he said, finishing his wine. ‘How are you called?’

‘Dmítri Andréich.’

‘Well, ‘Mítry Andréich, God bless you. We will be *kunaks*. Now you must come to see us. Though we are not rich people still we can treat a *kunak*, and I will tell mother in case you need anything—clotted cream or grapes—and if you come to the cordon I’m your servant to go hunting or to go across the river, anywhere you like! There now, only the other day, what a boar I killed, and I divided it among the Cossacks, but if I had only known I’d have given it to you.’

‘That’s all right, thank you! But don’t harness the horse, it has never been in harness.’

'Why harness the horse? And there is something else I'll tell you if you like,' said Lukáshka, bending his head. 'I have a *kunak*, Giréy Khan. He asked me to lie in ambush by the road where they come down from the mountains. Shall we go together? I'll not betray you. I'll be your *murid*.'¹

'Yes, we'll go; we'll go some day.'

Lukáshka seemed quite to have quieted down and to have understood Olénin's attitude towards him. His calmness and the ease of his behaviour surprised Olénin, and he did not even quite like it. They talked long, and it was late when Lukáshka, not tipsy (he never was tipsy) but having drunk a good deal, left Olénin after shaking hands.

Olénin looked out of the window to see what he would do. Lukáshka went out, hanging his head. Then, having led the horse out of the gate, he suddenly shook his head, threw the reins of the halter over its head, sprang onto its back like a cat, gave a wild shout, and galloped down the street. Olénin expected that Lukáshka would go to share his joy with Maryánka, but though he did not do so Olénin still felt his soul more at ease than ever before in his life. He was as delighted as a boy, and could not refrain from telling Vanyúsha not only that he had given Lukáshka the horse, but also why he had done it, as well as his new theory of happiness. Vanyúsha did not approve of his theory, and announced that '*l'argent il n'y a pas!*' and that therefore it was all nonsense.

Lukáshka rode home, jumped off the horse, and handed it over to his mother, telling her to let it out with the communal Cossack herd. He himself had to return to the cordon that same night. His deaf sister undertook to take the horse, and explained by signs that when she saw the man who had given the

¹ In the religious and racial revival led by Shamyl, a *murid* was a follower or disciple attached to a *murshid* or teacher.

horse, she would bow down at his feet. The old woman only shook her head at her son's story, and decided in her own mind that he had stolen it. She therefore told the deaf girl to take it to the herd before daybreak.

Lukáshka went back alone to the cordon pondering over Olénin's action. Though he did not consider the horse a good one, yet it was worth at least forty rubles and Lukáshka was very glad to have the present. But why it had been given him he could not at all understand, and therefore he did not experience the least feeling of gratitude. On the contrary, vague suspicions that the cadet had some evil intentions filled his mind. What those intentions were he could not decide, but neither could he admit the idea that a stranger would give him a horse worth forty rubles for nothing, just out of kindness; it seemed impossible. Had he been drunk one might understand it! He might have wished to show off. But the cadet had been sober, and therefore must have wished to bribe him to do something wrong. 'Eh, humbug!' thought Lukáshka. 'Haven't I got the horse and we'll see later on. I'm not a fool myself and we shall see who'll get the better of the other,' he thought, feeling the necessity of being on his guard, and therefore arousing in himself unfriendly feelings towards Olénin. He told no one how he had got the horse. To some he said he had bought it, to others he replied evasively. However, the truth soon got about in the village, and Lukáshka's mother and Maryánka, as well as Elias Vasilich and other Cossacks, when they heard of Olénin's unnecessary gift, were perplexed, and began to be on their guard against the Cadet. But despite their fears his action aroused in them a great respect for his simplicity and wealth.

'Have you heard,' said one, 'that the cadet quartered on Elias Vasilich has thrown a fifty-ruble horse at Lukáshka? He's rich! . . .'

‘Yes, I heard of it,’ replied another profoundly, ‘he must have done him some great service. We shall see what will come of this cadet. Eh! what luck that Snatcher has!’

‘Those cadets are crafty, awfully crafty,’ said a third. ‘See if he don’t go setting fire to a building, or doing something!’

CHAPTER XXIII

OLÉNIN’s life went on with monotonous regularity. He had little intercourse with the commanding officers or with his equals. The position of a rich cadet in the Caucasus was peculiarly advantageous in this respect. He was not sent out to work, or for training. As a reward for going on an expedition he was recommended for a commission, and meanwhile he was left in peace. The officers regarded him as an aristocrat and behaved towards him with dignity. Card-playing and the officers’ carousals accompanied by the soldier-singers, of which he had had experience when he was with the detachment, did not seem to him attractive, and he also avoided the society and life of the officers in the village. The life of officers stationed in a Cossack village has long had its own definite form. Just as every cadet or officer when in a fort regularly drinks porter, plays cards, and discusses the rewards given for taking part in the expeditions, so in the Cossack villages he regularly drinks *chikhir* with his hosts, treats the girls to sweetmeats and honey, dangles after the Cossack women, and falls in love, and occasionally marries there. Olénin always took his own path and had an unconscious objection to the beaten tracks. And here, too, he did not follow the ruts of a Caucasian officer’s life.

It came quite naturally to him to wake up at day-break. After drinking tea and admiring from his porch the mountains, the morning, and Maryánka,

he would put on a tattered ox-hide coat, sandals of soaked raw hide, buckle on a dagger, take a gun, put cigarettes and some lunch in a little bag, call his dog, and soon after five o'clock would start for the forest beyond the village. Towards seven in the evening he would return tired and hungry with five or six pheasants hanging from his belt (sometimes with some other animal) and with his bag of food and cigarettes untouched. If the thoughts in his head had lain like the lunch and cigarettes in the bag, one might have seen that during all those fourteen hours not a single thought had moved in it. He returned morally fresh, strong, and perfectly happy, and he could not tell what he had been thinking about all the time. Were they ideas, memories, or dreams that had been flitting through his mind? They were frequently all three. He would rouse himself and ask what he had been thinking about; and would see himself as a Cossack working in a vineyard with his Cossack wife, or an *abrek* in the mountains, or a boar running away from himself. And all the time he kept peering and watching for a pheasant, a boar, or a deer.

In the evening Daddy Eróshka would be sure to be sitting with him. Vanyúsha would bring a jug of *chikhir*, and they would converse quietly, drink, and separate to go quite contentedly to bed. The next day he would again go shooting, again be healthily weary, again they would sit conversing and drink their fill, and again be happy. Sometimes on a holiday or day of rest Olénin spent the whole day at home. Then his chief occupation was watching Maryánka, whose every movement, without realizing it himself, he followed greedily from his window or his porch. He regarded Maryánka and loved her (so he thought) just as he loved the beauty of the mountains and the sky, and he had no thought of entering into any relations with her. It seemed to him that between him and her such relations as there were

between her and the Cossack Lukáshka could not exist, and still less such as often existed between rich officers and other Cossack girls. It seemed to him that if he tried to do as his fellow officers did, he would exchange his complete enjoyment of contemplation for an abyss of suffering, disillusionment, and remorse. Besides, he had already achieved a triumph of self-sacrifice in connexion with her which had given him great pleasure, and above all he was in a way afraid of Maryánka and would not for anything have ventured to utter a word of love to her lightly.

Once during the summer, when Olénin had not gone out shooting but was sitting at home, quite unexpectedly a Moscow acquaintance, a very young man whom he had met in society, came in.

'Ah, *mon cher*, my dear fellow, how glad I was when I heard that you were here!' he began in his Moscow French, and he went on intermingling French words in his remarks. 'They said, "Olénin". What Olénin? and I was so pleased. . . . Fancy fate bringing us together here! Well and how are you? How? Why?' and Prince Belétski told his whole story: how he had temporarily entered the regiment, how the Commander-in-Chief had offered to take him as an adjutant, and how he would take up the post after this campaign although personally he felt quite indifferent about it.

'Living here in this hole one must at least make a career—get a cross—or a rank—be transferred to the Guards. That is quite indispensable, not for myself but for the sake of my relations and friends. The prince received me very well; he is a very decent fellow,' said Belétski, and went on unceasingly. 'I have been recommended for the St. Anna Cross for the expedition. Now I shall stay here a bit until we start on the campaign. It's capital here. What women! Well and how are you getting on? I was told by our captain, Stártsev you know, a kind-

hearted stupid creature. . . . Well, he said you were living like an awful savage, seeing no one! I quite understand you don't want to be mixed up with the set of officers we have here. I am so glad now you and I will be able to see something of one another. I have put up at the Cossack corporal's house. There is such a girl there, Ústenka! I tell you she's just charming.'

And more and more French and Russian words came pouring forth from that world which Olénin thought he had left for ever. The general opinion about Belétski was that he was a nice, good-natured fellow. Perhaps he really was; but in spite of his pretty, good-natured face, Olénin thought him extremely unpleasant. He seemed just to exhale that filthiness which Olénin had forsworn. What vexed him most was that he could not—had not the strength—abruptly to repulse this man who came from that world: as if that old world he used to belong to had an irresistible claim on him. Olénin felt angry with Belétski and with himself, yet against his wish he introduced French phrases into his own conversation, was interested in the Commander-in-Chief and in their Moscow acquaintances, and because in this Cossack village he and Belétski both spoke French, he spoke contemptuously of their fellow officers and of the Cossacks, and was friendly with Belétski, promising to visit him and inviting him to drop in to see him. Olénin however did not himself go to see Belétski.

Vanyúsha for his part approved of Belétski, remarking that he was a real gentleman.

Belétski at once adopted the customary life of a rich officer in a Cossack village. Before Olénin's eyes, in one month he came to be like an old resident of the village; he made the old men drunk, arranged evening parties, and himself went to parties arranged by the girls—bragged of his conquests, and even got so far that, for some unknown reason, the woman and girls

began calling him grandad, and the Cossacks, to whom a man who loved wine and women was clearly understandable, got used to him and even liked him better than they did Olénin, who was a puzzle to them.

CHAPTER XXIV

It was five in the morning. Vanyúsha was in the porch heating the samovar, and using the leg of a long boot instead of bellows.¹ Olénin had already ridden off to bathe in the Terek. (He had recently invented a new amusement: to swim his horse in the river.) His landlady was in her outhouse, and the dense smoke of the kindling fire rose from the chimney. The girl was milking the buffalo-cow in the shed. 'Can't keep quiet, the damned thing!' came her impatient voice, followed by the rhythmical sound of milking.

From the street in front of the house horses' hoofs were heard clattering briskly, and Olénin, riding bare-back on a handsome dark-grey horse which was still wet and shining, rode up to the gate. Maryánka's handsome head, tied round with a red kerchief, appeared from the shed and again disappeared. Olénin was wearing a red silk shirt, a white Circassian coat girdled with a strap which carried a dagger, and a tall cap. He sat his well-fed wet horse with a slightly conscious elegance and, holding his gun at his back, stooped to open the gate. His hair was still wet, and his face shone with youth and health. He thought himself handsome, agile, and like a brave; but he was mistaken. To any experienced Caucasian he was still only a soldier. When he noticed that the girl had put out her head he stooped with particular smartness, threw open the gate and, tightening the reins, swished

¹ These boots have concertina-like sides, and can be used instead of bellows to make the charcoal in the samovar burn up.

his whip and entered the yard. 'Is tea ready, Vanyúsha?' he cried gaily, not looking at the door of the shed. He felt with pleasure how his fine horse, pressing down its flanks, pulling at the bridle and with every muscle quivering and with each foot ready to leap over the fence, pranced on the hard clay of the yard. '*C'est prêt,*' answered Vanyúsha. Olénin felt as if Maryánka's beautiful head was still looking out of the shed but he did not turn to look at her. As he jumped down from his horse he made an awkward movement and caught his gun against the porch, and turned a frightened look towards the shed, where there was no one to be seen and whence the sound of milking could still be heard.

Soon after he had entered the hut he came out again and sat down with his pipe and a book on the side of the porch which was not yet exposed to the rays of the sun. He meant not to go anywhere before dinner that day, and to write some long-postponed letters; but somehow he felt disinclined to leave his place in the porch, and he was as reluctant to go back into the hut as if it had been a prison. The housewife had heated her oven, and the girl, having driven the cattle, had come back and was collecting *kisyyak* and heaping it up along the fence. Olénin went on reading, but did not understand a word of what was written in the book that lay open before him. He kept lifting his eyes from it and looking at the powerful young woman who was moving about. Whether she stepped into the moist morning shadow thrown by the house, or went out into the middle of the yard lit up by the joyous young light, so that the whole of her stately figure in its bright coloured garment gleamed in the sunshine and cast a black shadow—he always feared to lose any one of her movements. It delighted him to see how freely and gracefully her figure bent: into what folds her only garment, a pink smock, draped itself on her bosom and along her shapely legs;

how she drew herself up and her tight-drawn smock showed the outline of her heaving bosom, how the soles of her narrow feet in her worn red slippers rested on the ground without altering their shape; how her strong arms with the sleeves rolled up, exerting the muscles, used the spade almost as if in anger, and how her deep dark eyes sometimes glanced at him. Though the delicate brows frowned, yet her eyes expressed pleasure and a knowledge of her own beauty.

'I say, Olénin, have you been up long?' said Belétski as he entered the yard dressed in the coat of a Caucasian officer.

'Ah, Belétski,' replied Olénin, holding out his hand. 'How is it you are out so early?'

'I had to. I was driven out; we are having a ball to-night. Maryánka, of course you'll come to Ústenka's?' he added, turning to the girl.

Olénin felt surprised that Belétski could address this woman so easily. But Maryánka, as though she had not heard him, bent her head, and throwing the spade across her shoulder went with her firm masculine tread towards the outhouse.

'She's shy, the wench is shy,' Belétski called after her. 'Shy of you,' he added as, smiling gaily, he ran up the steps of the porch.

'How is it you are having a ball and have been driven out?'

'It's at Ústenka's, at my landlady's, that the ball is, and you two are invited. A ball consists of a pie and a gathering of girls.'

'What should we do there?'

Belétski smiled knowingly and winked, jerking his head in the direction of the outhouse into which Maryánka had disappeared.

Olénin shrugged his shoulders and blushed.

'Well, really you are a strange fellow!' said he.

'Come now, don't pretend!'

Olénin frowned, and Belétski noticing this smiled

insinuatingly. 'Oh, come, what do you mean?' he said, 'living in the same house—and such a fine girl, a splendid girl, a perfect beauty——'

'Wonderfully beautiful! I never saw such a woman before,' replied Olénin.

'Well then?' said Belétski, quite unable to understand the situation.

'It may be strange,' replied Olénin, 'but why should I not say what is true? Since I have lived here women don't seem to exist for me. And it is so good, really! Now what can there be in common between us and women like these? Eróshka—that's a different matter! He and I have a passion in common—sport.'

'There now! In common! And what have I in common with Amália Ivánovna? It's the same thing! You may say they're not very clean—that's another matter . . . *À la guerre, comme à la guerre!* . . .'

'But I have never known any Amália Ivánovnas, and have never known how to behave with women of that sort,' replied Olénin. 'One cannot respect them, but these I do respect.'

'Well go on respecting them! Who wants to prevent you?'

Olénin did not reply. He evidently wanted to complete what he had begun to say. It was very near his heart.

'I know I am an exception . . .'

 He was visibly confused. 'But my life has so shaped itself that I not only see no necessity to renounce my rules, but I could not live here, let alone live as happily as I am doing, were I to live as you do. Therefore I look for something quite different from what you look for.'

Belétski raised his eyebrows incredulously. 'Anyhow, come to me this evening; Maryánka will be there and I will make you acquainted. Do come, please! If you feel dull you can go away. Will you come?'

'I would come, but to speak frankly I am afraid of being seriously carried away.'

'Oh, oh, oh!' shouted Belétski. 'Only come, and I'll see that you aren't. Will you? On your word?'

'I would come, but really I don't understand what we shall do; what part we shall play!'

'Please, I beg of you. You will come?'

'Yes, perhaps I'll come,' said Olénin.

'Really now! Charming women such as one sees nowhere else, and to live like a monk! What an idea! Why spoil your life and not make use of what is at hand? Have you heard that our company is ordered to Vozdvízhensk?'

'Hardly. I was told the 8th Company would be sent there,' said Olénin.

'No. I have had a letter from the adjutant there. He writes that the Prince himself will take part in the campaign. I am very glad I shall see something of him. I'm beginning to get tired of this place.'

'I hear we shall start on a raid soon.'

'I have not heard of it; but I have heard that Krinovítsin has received the Order of St. Anna for a raid. He expected a lieutenancy,' said Belétski laughing. 'He was let in! He has set off for headquarters.'

It was growing dusk and Olénin began thinking about the party. The invitation he had received worried him. He felt inclined to go, but what might take place there seemed strange, absurd, and even rather alarming. He knew that neither Cossack men nor older women, nor anyone besides the girls, were to be there. What was going to happen? How was he to behave? What would they talk about? What connexion was there between him and those wild Cossack girls? Belétski had told him of such curious, cynical, and yet rigid relations. It seemed strange to think that he would be there in the same hut with Maryánka and perhaps might have to talk to her. It seemed to him impossible when he remembered her majestic bearing. But Belétski spoke of it as if it

were all perfectly simple. 'Is it possible that Belétski will treat Maryánka in the same way? That is interesting,' thought he. 'No, better not go. It's all so horrid, so vulgar, and above all—it leads to nothing!' But again he was worried by the question of what would take place; and besides he felt as if bound by a promise. He went out without having made up his mind one way or the other, but he walked as far as Belétski's, and went in there.

The hut in which Belétski lived was like Olénin's. It was raised nearly five feet from the ground on wooden piles, and had two rooms. In the first (which Olénin entered by the steep flight of steps) feather beds, rugs, blankets, and cushions were tastefully and handsomely arranged, Cossack fashion, along the main wall. On the side wall hung brass basins and weapons, while on the floor, under a bench, lay water-melons and pumpkins. In the second room there was a big brick oven, a table, and sectarian icons. It was here that Belétski was quartered, with his camp-bed and his pack and trunks. His weapons hung on the wall with a little rug behind them, and on the table were his toilet appliances and some portraits. A silk dressing-gown had been thrown on the bench. Belétski himself, clean and good looking, lay on the bed in his underclothing, reading *Les Trois Mousquetaires*.

He jumped up.

'There, you see how I have arranged things. Fine! Well, it's good that you have come. They are working furiously. Do you know what the pie is made of? Dough with a stuffing of pork and grapes. But that's not the point. You just look at the commotion out there!'

And really, on looking out of the window they saw an unusual bustle going on in the hut. 'Girls ran in and out, now for one thing and now for another.

'Will it soon be ready?' cried Belétski.

'Very soon! Why? Is Grandad hungry?' and from the hut came the sound of ringing laughter.

Ústenka, plump, small, rosy, and pretty, with her sleeves turned up, ran into Belétski's hut to fetch some plates.

'Get away or I shall smash the plates!' she squeaked, escaping from Belétski. 'You'd better come and help,' she shouted to Olénin, laughing. 'And don't forget to get some refreshments for the girls.' ('Refreshments' meaning spice-bread and sweets.)

'And has Maryánka come?'

'Of course! She brought some dough.'

'Do you know,' said Belétski, 'if one were to dress Ústenka up and clean and polish her up a bit, she'd be better than all our beauties. Have you ever seen that Cossack woman who married a colonel; she was charming! Bórsheva? What dignity! Where do they get it . . .'

'I have not seen Bórsheva, but I think nothing could be better than the costume they wear here.'

'Ah, I'm first rate at fitting into any kind of life,' said Belétski with a sigh of pleasure. 'I'll go and see what they are up to.'

He threw his dressing-gown over his shoulders and ran out, shouting, 'And you look after the "refreshments".'

Olénin sent Belétski's orderly to buy spice-bread and honey; but it suddenly seemed to him so disgusting to give money (as if he were bribing someone) that he gave no definite reply to the orderly's question: 'How much spice-bread with peppermint, and how much with honey?'

'Just as you please.'

'Shall I spend all the money,' asked the old soldier impressively. 'The peppermint is dearer. It's sixteen kopeks.' ●

'Yes, yes, spend it all,' answered Olénin and sat down by the window, surprised that his heart was

thumping as if he were preparing himself for something serious and wicked.

He heard screaming and shrieking in the girls' hut when Belétski went there, and a few moments later saw how he jumped out and ran down the steps, accompanied by shrieks, bustle, and laughter.

'Turned out,' he said.

A little later Ústenka entered and solemnly invited her visitors to come in: announcing that all was ready.

When they came into the room they saw that everything was really ready. Ústenka was rearranging the cushions along the wall. On the table, which was covered by a disproportionately small cloth, was a decanter of *chikhir* and some dried fish. The room smelt of dough and grapes. Some half dozen girls in smart tunics, with their heads not covered as usual with kerchiefs, were huddled together in a corner behind the oven, whispering, giggling, and spluttering with laughter.

'I humbly beg you to do honour to my patron saint,' said Ústenka, inviting her guests to the table.

Olénin noticed Maryánka among the group of girls, who without exception were all handsome, and he felt vexed and hurt that he met her in such vulgar and awkward circumstances. He felt stupid and awkward, and made up his mind to do what Belétski did. Belétski stepped to the table somewhat solemnly yet with confidence and ease, drank a glass of wine to Ústenka's health, and invited the others to do the same. Ústenka announced that girls don't drink.

'We might with a little honey,' exclaimed a voice from among the group of girls.

The orderly, who had just returned with the honey and spice-cakes, was called in. He looked askance (whether with envy or with contempt) at the gentlemen, who in his opinion were on the 'spree; and carefully and conscientiously handed over to them a piece of honeycomb and the cakes wrapped up in a

piece of greyish paper, and began explaining circumstantially all about the price and the change, but Belétski sent him away.

Having mixed honey with wine in the glasses, and having lavishly scattered the three pounds of spice-cakes on the table, Belétski dragged the girls from their corners by force, made them sit down at the table, and began distributing the cakes among them. Olénin involuntarily noticed how Maryánka's sun-burnt but small hand closed on two round peppermint nuts and one brown one, and that she did not know what to do with them. The conversation was halting and constrained, in spite of Ústenka's and Belétski's free and easy manner and their wish to enliven the company. Olénin faltered, and tried to think of something to say, feeling that he was exciting curiosity and perhaps provoking ridicule and infecting the others with his shyness. He blushed, and it seemed to him that Maryánka in particular was feeling uncomfortable. 'Most likely they are expecting us to give them some money,' thought he. 'How are we to do it? And how can we manage quickest to give it and get away?'

CHAPTER XXV

'How is it you don't know your own lodger?' said Belétski, addressing Maryánka.

'How is one to know him if he never comes to see us?' answered Maryánka, with a look at Olénin.

Olénin felt frightened, he did not know of what. He flushed and, hardly knowing what he was saying, remarked; 'I'm afraid of your mother. She gave me such a scolding the first time I went in.'

Maryánka burst out laughing.

'And so you were frightened?' she said, and glanced at him and turned away.

It was the first time Olénin had seen the whole of

her beautiful face. Till then he had seen her with her kerchief covering her to the eyes. It was not for nothing that she was reckoned the beauty of the village. Ústenka was a pretty girl, small, plump, rosy, with merry brown eyes, and red lips which were perpetually smiling and chattering. Maryánka on the contrary was certainly not pretty but beautiful. Her features might have been considered too masculine and almost harsh had it not been for her tall stately figure, her powerful chest and shoulders, and especially the severe yet tender expression of her long dark eyes which were darkly shadowed beneath their black brows, and for the gentle expression of her mouth and smile. She rarely smiled, but her smile was always striking. She seemed to radiate virginal strength and health. All the girls were good-looking, but they themselves and Belétski, and the orderly when he brought in the spice-cakes, all involuntarily gazed at Maryánka, and anyone addressing the girls was sure to address her. She seemed a proud and happy queen among them.

Belétski, trying to keep up the spirit of the party, chattered incessantly, made the girls hand round *chikhir*, fooled about with them, and kept making improper remarks in French about Maryánka's beauty to Olénin, calling her 'yours' (*la vôtre*), and advising him to behave as he did himself. Olénin felt more and more uncomfortable. He was devising an excuse to get out and run away when Belétski announced that Ústenka, whose saint's day it was, must offer *chikhir* to everybody with a kiss. She consented on condition that they should put money on her plate, as is the custom at weddings. 'What fiend brought me to this disgusting feast?' thought Olénin, rising to go away.

'Where are you off to?'

'I'll fetch some tobacco,' he said, meaning to escape, but Belétski seized his hand.

'I have some money,' he said to him in French.

'One can't go away, one has to pay here,' thought Olénin bitterly, vexed at his own awkwardness. 'Can't I really behave like Belétski? I ought not to have come, but once I am here I must not spoil their fun. I must drink like a Cossack,' and taking the wooden bowl (holding about eight tumblers) he almost filled it with *chikhir* and drank it almost all. The girls looked at him, surprised and almost frightened, as he drank. It seemed to them strange and not right. Ústenka brought them another glass each, and kissed them both. 'There girls, now we'll have some fun,' she said, clinking on the plate the four rubles the men had put there.

Olénin no longer felt awkward, but became talkative.

'Now, Maryánka, it's your turn to offer us wine and a kiss,' said Belétski, seizing her hand.

'Yes, I'll give you such a kiss!' she said playfully, preparing to strike at him.

'One can kiss Grandad without payment,' said another girl.

'There's a sensible girl,' said Belétski, kissing the struggling girl. 'No, you must offer it,' he insisted, addressing Maryánka. 'Offer a glass to your lodger.'

And taking her by the hand he led her to the bench and sat her down beside Olénin.

'What a beauty,' he said, turning her head to see it in profile.

Maryánka did not resist but proudly smiling turned her long eyes towards Olénin.

'A beautiful girl,' repeated Belétski.

'Yes, see what a beauty I am,' Maryánka's look seemed to endorse. Without considering what he was doing Olénin embraced Maryánka and was going to kiss her, but she suddenly extricated herself, upsetting Belétski and pushing the top off the table, and sprang away towards the oven. There was much shouting and laughter. Then Belétski whispered something to

the girls and suddenly they all ran out into the passage and locked the door behind them.

'Why did you kiss Belétski and won't kiss me?' asked Olénin.

'Oh, just so. I don't want to, that's all!' she answered, pouting and frowning. 'He's Grandad,' she added with a smile. She went to the door and began to bang at it. 'Why have you locked the door, you devils?'

'Well, let them be there and us here,' said Olénin, drawing closer to her.

She frowned, and sternly pushed him away with her hand. And again she appeared so majestically handsome to Olénin that he came to his senses and felt ashamed of what he was doing. He went to the door and began pulling at it himself.

'Belétski! Open the door! What a stupid joke!'

Maryánka again gave a bright happy laugh. 'Ah, you're afraid of me?' she said.

'Yes, you know you're as cross as your mother.'

'Spend more of your time with Eróshka; that will make the girls love you!' And she smiled, looking straight and close into his eyes.

He did not know what to reply. 'And if I were to come to see you——' he let fall.

'That would be a different matter,' she replied, tossing her head.

At that moment Belétski pushed the door open, and Maryánka sprang away from Olénin and in doing so her thigh struck his leg.

'It's all nonsense what I have been thinking about—love and self-sacrifice and Lukáshka. Happiness is the one thing. He who is happy is right,' flashed through Olénin's mind, and with a strength unexpected to himself he seized and kissed the beautiful Maryánka on her temple and her cheek. Maryánka was not angry, but only burst into a loud laugh and ran out to the other girls.

That was the end of the party. Ústenka's mother, returned from her work, gave all the girls a scolding, and turned them all out.

CHAPTER XXVI

'YES,' thought Olénin, as he walked home. 'I need only slacken the reins a bit and I might fall desperately in love with this Cossack girl.' He went to bed with these thoughts, but expected it all to blow over and that he would continue to live as before.

But the old life did not return. His relations to Maryánka were changed. The wall that had separated them was broken down. Olénin now greeted her every time they met.

The master of the house having returned to collect the rent, on hearing of Olénin's wealth and generosity invited him to his hut. The old woman received him kindly, and from the day of the party onwards Olénin often went in of an evening and sat with them till late at night. He seemed to be living in the village just as he used to, but within him everything had changed. He spent his days in the forest, and towards eight o'clock, when it began to grow dusk, he would go to see his hosts, alone or with Daddy Eróshka. They grew so used to him that they were surprised when he stayed away. He paid well for his wine and was a quiet fellow. Vanyúsha would bring him his tea and he would sit down in a corner near the oven. The old woman did not mind him but went on with her work, and over their tea or their *chikhir* they talked about Cossack affairs, about the neighbours, or about Russia: Olénin relating and the others inquiring. Sometimes he brought a book and read to himself. Maryánka crouched like a wild goat with her feet drawn up under her, sometimes on the top of the oven,¹ sometimes in a dark corner. She did not take part

¹ The stove or oven was large, with a flat top on which anyone could sit or lie.

in the conversations, but Olénin saw her eyes and face and heard her moving or cracking sunflower seeds, and he felt that she listened with her whole being when he spoke, and was aware of his presence while he silently read to himself. Sometimes he thought her eyes were fixed on him, and meeting their radiance he involuntarily became silent and gazed at her. Then she would instantly hide her face and he would pretend to be deep in conversation with the old woman, while he listened all the time to her breathing and to her every movement and waited for her to look at him again. In the presence of others she was generally bright and friendly with him, but when they were alone together she was shy and rough. Sometimes he came in before Maryánka had returned home. Suddenly he would hear her firm footsteps and catch a glimmer of her blue cotton smock at the open door. Then she would step into the middle of the hut, catch sight of him, and her eyes would give a scarcely perceptible kindly smile, and he would feel happy and frightened.

He neither sought for nor wished for anything from her, but every day her presence became more and more necessary to him.

Olénin had entered into the life of the Cossack village so fully that his past seemed quite foreign to him. As to the future, especially a future outside the world in which he was now living, it did not interest him at all. When he received letters from home, from relatives and friends, he was offended by the evident distress with which they regarded him as a lost man, while he in his village considered those as lost who did not live as he was living. He felt sure he would never repent of having broken away from his former surroundings and of having settled down in this village to such a solitary and original life.* When out on expeditions, and when quartered at one of the forts, he felt happy too; but it was here, from under

Daddy Eróshka's wing, from the forest and from his hut at the end of the village, and especially when he thought of Maryánka and Lukáshka, that he seemed to see the falseness of his former life. That falseness used to rouse his indignation even before, but now it seemed inexpressibly vile and ridiculous. Here he felt freer and freer every day and more and more of a man. The Caucasus now appeared entirely different to what his imagination had painted it. He had found nothing at all like his dreams, nor like the descriptions of the Caucasus he had heard and read. 'There are none of all those chestnut steeds, precipices, Amalet Beks, heroes or villains,' thought he. 'The people live as nature lives: they die, are born, unite, and more are born—they fight, eat and drink, rejoice and die, without any restrictions but those that nature imposes on sun and grass, on animal and tree. They have no other laws.' Therefore these people, compared to himself, appeared to him beautiful, strong, and free, and the sight of them made him feel ashamed and sorry for himself. Often it seriously occurred to him to throw up everything, to get registered as a Cossack, to buy a hut and cattle and marry a Cossack woman (only not Maryánka, whom he conceded to Lukáshka), and to live with Daddy Eróshka and go shooting and fishing with him, and go with the Cossacks on their expeditions. 'Why ever don't I do it? What am I waiting for?' he asked himself, and he egged himself on and shamed himself. 'Am I afraid of doing what I hold to be reasonable and right? Is the wish to be a simple Cossack, to live close to nature, not to injure anyone but even to do good to others, more stupid than my former dreams, such as those of becoming a minister of state or a colonel?' but a voice seemed to say that he should wait, and not take any decision. He was held back by a dim consciousness that he could not live altogether like Eróshka and Lukáshka because he had a different

idea of happiness—he was held back by the thought that happiness lies in self-sacrifice. What he had done for Lukáshka continued to give him joy. He kept looking for occasions to sacrifice himself for others, but did not meet with them. Sometimes he forgot this newly discovered recipe for happiness and considered himself capable of identifying his life with Daddy Eróshka's, but then he quickly bethought himself and promptly clutched at the idea of conscious self-sacrifice, and from that basis looked calmly and proudly at all men and at their happiness.

CHAPTER XXVII

Just before the vintage Lukáshka came on horseback to see Olénin. He looked more dashing than ever.

'Well? Are you getting married?' asked Olénin, greeting him merrily.

Lukáshka gave no direct reply.

'There, I've exchanged your horse across the river. This is a horse! A Kabardá horse from the Lov¹ stud. I know horses.'

They examined the new horse and made him caracole about the yard. The horse really was an exceptionally fine one, a broad and long gelding, with glossy coat, thick silky tail, and the soft fine mane and crest of a thoroughbred. He was so well fed that 'you might go to sleep on his back' as Lukáshka expressed it. His hoofs, eyes, teeth, were exquisitely shaped and sharply outlined, as one only finds them in very pure-bred horses. Olénin could not help admiring the horse, he had not yet met with such a beauty in the Caucasus.

'And how it goes!' said Lukáshka, patting its neck. 'What a step! And so clever—he simply runs after his master.'

¹ The Lov Stud Farm was considered one of the best in the Caucasus. See also note on p. 245.

‘Did you have to add much to make the exchange?’ asked Olénin.

‘I did not count it,’ answered Lukáshka with a smile. ‘I got him from a *kunak*.’

‘A wonderfully beautiful horse! What would you take for it?’ asked Olénin.

‘I have been offered a hundred and fifty rubles for it, but I’ll give it you for nothing,’ said Lukáshka, merrily. ‘Only say the word and it’s yours. I’ll unsaddle it and you may take it. Only give me some sort of a horse for my duties.’

‘No, on no account.’

‘Well then, here is a dagger I’ve brought you,’ said Lukáshka, unfastening his girdle and taking out one of the two daggers which hung from it. ‘I got it from across the river.’

‘Oh, thank you!’

‘And mother has promised to bring you some grapes herself.’

‘That’s quite unnecessary. We’ll balance up some day. You see I don’t offer you any money for the dagger!’

‘How could you? We are *kunaks*. It’s just the same as when Giréy Khan across the river took me into his home and said, “Choose what you like!” So I took this sword. It’s our custom.’

They went into the hut and had a drink.

‘Are you staying here awhile?’ asked Olénin.

‘No, I have come to say good-bye. They are sending me from the cordon to a company beyond the Terek. I am going to-night with my comrade Nazárka.’

‘And when is the wedding to be?’

‘I shall be coming back for the betrothal, and then I shall return to the company again,’ Lukáshka replied reluctantly.

‘What, and see nothing of your betrothed?’

‘Just so—what is the good of looking at her? When you go on campaign ask in our company for Lukáshka

the Broad. But what a lot of boars there are in our parts! I've killed two. I'll take you.'

'Well, good-bye! Christ save you.'

Lukáshka mounted his horse, and without calling on Maryánka, rode caracoling down the street, where Nazárka was already awaiting him.

'I say, shan't we call round?' asked Nazárka, winking in the direction of Yámka's house.

'That's a good one!' said Lukáshka. 'Here, take my horse to her and if I don't comesoon give him some hay. I shall reach the company by the morning any way.'

'Hasn't the cadet given you anything more?'

'I am thankful to have paid him back with a dagger—he was going to ask for the horse,' said Lukáshka, dismounting and handing over the horse to Nazárka.

He darted into the yard past Olénin's very window, and came up to the window of the cornet's hut. It was already quite dark. Maryánka, wearing only her smock, was combing her hair preparing for bed.

'It's I——' whispered the Cossack.

Maryánka's look was severely indifferent, but her face suddenly brightened up when she heard her name. She opened the window and, leant out, frightened and joyous.

'What—what do you want?' she said.

'Open!' uttered Lukáshka. 'Let me in for a minute. I am so sick of waiting! It's awful!'

He took hold of her head through the window and kissed her.

'Really, do open!'

'Why do you talk nonsense? I've told you I won't! Have you come for long?'

He did not answer but went on kissing her, and she did not ask again.

'There, through the window one can't even hug you properly,' said Lukáshka.

'Maryánka dear!' came the voice of her mother, 'who is that with you?'

Lukáshka took off his cap, which might have been seen, and crouched down by the window.

‘Go, be quick!’ whispered Maryánka.

‘Lukáshka called round,’ she answered; ‘he was asking for Daddy.’

‘Well then send him here!’

‘He’s gone; said he was in a hurry.’

In fact, Lukáshka, stooping as with big strides he passed under the windows, ran out through the yard and towards Yámka’s house unseen by anyone but Olénin. After drinking two bowls of *chikhir* he and Nazárka rode away to the outpost. The night was warm, dark, and calm. They rode in silence, only the footfall of their horses was heard. Lukáshka started a song about the Cossack, Mingál, but stopped before he had finished the first verse, and after a pause, turning to Nazárka, said:

‘I say, she wouldn’t let me in!’

‘Oh?’ rejoined Nazárka. ‘I knew she wouldn’t. D’you know what Yámka told me? The cadet has begun going to their house. Daddy Eróshka brags that he got a gun from the cadet for getting him Maryánka.’ •

‘He lies, the old devil!’ said Lukáshka, angrily. ‘She’s not such a girl. If he does not look out I’ll wallop that old devil’s sides,’ and he began his favourite song:

‘From the village of Izmáylov,
From the master’s favourite garden,
Once escaped a keen-eyed falcon.
Soon after him a huntsman came a-riding,
And he beckoned to the falcon that had strayed,
But the bright-eyed bird thus answered:
“In gold cage you could not keep me,
On your hand you could not hold me,
So now I fly to blue seas far away.
There a white swan I will kill,
Of sweet swan-flesh have my fill.”’

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE betrothal was taking place in the cornet's hut. Lukáshka had returned to the village, but had not been to see Olénin, and Olénin had not gone to the betrothal though he had been invited. He was sad as he had never been since he settled in this Cossack village. He had seen Lukáshka earlier in the evening and was worried by the question why Lukáshka was so cold towards him. Olénin shut himself up in his hut and began writing in his diary as follows:

'Many things have I pondered over lately and much have I changed,' wrote he, 'and I have come back to the copybook maxim: The one way to be happy is to love, to love self-denyingly, to love everybody and everything; to spread a web of love on all sides and to take all who come into it. In this way I caught Vanyúsha, Daddy Eróshka, Lukáshka, and Maryánka.'

As Olénin was finishing this sentence Daddy Eróshka entered the room.

Eróshka was in the happiest frame of mind. A few evenings before this, Olénin had gone to see him and had found him with a proud and happy face deftly skinning the carcass of a boar with a small knife in the yard. The dogs (Lyam his pet among them) were lying close by watching what he was doing and gently wagging their tails. The little boys were respectfully looking at him through the fence and not even teasing him as was their wont. His women neighbours, who were as a rule not too gracious towards him, greeted him and brought him, one a jug of *chikhir*, another some clotted cream, and a third a little flour. The next day Eróshka sat in his store-room all covered with blood, and distributed pounds of boar-flesh, taking in payment money from some and wine from others. His face clearly expressed, 'God has sent me luck. I have killed a boar, so now I am wanted. Consequently he naturally began to drink, and had

gone on for four days never leaving the village. Besides which he had had something to drink at the betrothal.

He came to Olénin quite drunk: his face red, his beard tangled, but wearing a new *besmet* trimmed with gold braid; and he brought with him a *balaláyka*¹ which he had obtained beyond the river. He had long promised Olénin this treat, and felt in the mood for it, so that he was sorry to find Olénin writing.

'Write on, write on, my lad,' he whispered, as if he thought that a spirit sat between him and the paper and must not be frightened away, and he softly and silently sat down on the floor. When Daddy Eróshka was drunk his favourite position was on the floor. Olénin looked round, ordered some wine to be brought, and continued to write. Eróshka found it dull to drink by himself and he wished to talk.

'I've been to the betrothal at the cornet's. But there! They're shwine!—Don't want them!—Have come to you.'

'And where did you get your *balaláyka*?' asked Olénin, still writing.

'I've been beyond the river and got it there, brother mine,' he answered, also very quietly. 'I'm a master at it. Tartar or Cossack, squire or soldiers' songs, any kind you please.'

Olénin looked at him again, smiled, and went on writing.

That smile emboldened the old man.

'Come, leave off my lad, leave off!' he said with sudden firmness.

'Well, perhaps I will.'

'Come, people have injured you but leave them alone, spit at them! Come, what's the use of writing and writing, what's the good?'

And he tried to mimic Olénin by tapping the floor

¹ A three-stringed guitar, corresponding to the banjo of the American negroes.

with his thick fingers, and then twisted his big face to express contempt.

'What's the good of writing quibbles. Better have a spree and show you're a man!'

No other conception of writing found place in his head except that of legal chicanery.

Olénin burst out laughing and so did Eróshka. Then, jumping up from the floor, the latter began to show off his skill on the *balaláyka* and to sing Tartar songs.

'Why write, my good fellow! You'd better listen to what I'll sing to you. When you're dead you won't hear any more songs. Make merry now!'

First he sang a song of his own composing accompanied by a dance:

'Ah, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dim,
Say where did they last see him?
In a booth, at the fair,
He was selling pins, there.'

Then he sang a song he had learnt from his former sergeant-major:

'Deep I fell in love on Monday, ¹
Tuesday nothing did but sigh,
Wednesday I popped the question,
Thursday waited her reply.
Friday, late, it came at last,
Then all hope for me was past!
Saturday my life to take
I determined like a man,
But for my salvation's sake
Sunday morning changed my plan!'

Then he sang again:

'Oh dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dim,
Say where did they last see him.'

And after that, winking, twitching his shoulders, and footing it to the tune, he sang:

'I will kiss you and embrace,
Ribbons red twine round you;
And I'll call you little Grace.
Oh! you little Grace now do
Tell me, do you love me true?'

And he became so excited that with a sudden dashing movement he started dancing around the room accompanying himself the while.

Songs like 'Dee, dee, dee'—'gentlemen's songs'—he sang for Olénin's benefit, but after drinking three more tumblers of *chikhir* he remembered old times and began singing real Cossack and Tartar songs. In the midst of one of his favourite songs his voice suddenly trembled and he ceased singing, and only continued strumming on the *balaláyka*.

'Oh, my dear friend!' he said.

The peculiar sound of his voice made Olénin look round. The old man was weeping. Tears stood in his eyes and one tear was running down his cheek.

'You are gone, my young days, and will never come back!' he said, blubbing and halting. 'Drink, why don't you drink!' he suddenly shouted with a deafening roar, without wiping away his tears.

There was one Tartar song that specially moved him. It had few words, but its charm lay in the sad refrain. 'Ay day, dalalay!' Eróshka translated the words of the song: 'A youth drove his sheep from the *aoul* to the mountains: the Russians came and burnt the *aoul*, they killed all the men and took all the women into bondage. The youth returned from the mountains. Where the *aoul* had stood was an empty space; his mother not there, nor his brothers, nor his house; one tree alone was left standing. The youth sat beneath the tree and wept. "Alone like thee, alone am I left,"' and Eróshka began singing: 'Ay day, dalalay!' and the old man repeated several times this wailing, heart-rending refrain.

When he had finished the refrain Eróshka suddenly

seized a gun that hung on the wall, rushed hurriedly out into the yard and fired off both barrels into the air. Then again he began, more dolefully, his 'Ay day, dalalay—ah, ah,' and ceased.

Olénin followed him into the porch and looked up into the starry sky in the direction where the shots had flashed. In the cornet's house there were lights and the sound of voices. In the yard girls were crowding round the porch and the windows, and running backwards and forwards between the hut and the outhouse. Some Cossacks rushed out of the hut and could not refrain from shouting, re-echoing the refrain of Daddy Eróshka's song and his shots.

'Why are you not at the betrothal?' asked Olénin.

'Never mind them! Never mind them!' muttered the old man, who had evidently been offended by something there. 'Don't like them, I don't. Oh, those people! Come back into the hut! Let them make merry by themselves and we'll make merry by ourselves.'

Olénin went in.

'And Lukáshka, is he happy? Won't he come to see me?' he asked.

'What, Lukáshka? They've lied to him and said I am getting his girl for you,' whispered the old man. 'But what's the girl? She will be ours if we want her. Give enough money—and she's ours. I'll fix it up for you. Really!'

'No, Daddy, money can do nothing if she does not love me. You'd better not talk like that!'

'We are not loved, you and I. We are forlorn,' said Daddy Eróshka suddenly, and again he began to cry.

Listening to the old man's talk Olénin had drunk more than usual. 'So now my Lukáshka is happy,' thought he; yet he felt sad. The old man had drunk so much that evening that he fell down on the floor and Vanyúsha had to call soldiers in to help, and spat

as they dragged the old man out. He was so angry with the old man for his bad behaviour that he did not even say a single French word.

CHAPTER XXIX

It was August. For days the sky had been cloudless, the sun scorched unbearably and from early morning the warm wind raised a whirl of hot sand from the sand-drifts and from the road, and bore it in the air through the reeds, the trees, and the village. The grass and the leaves on the trees were covered with dust, the roads and dried-up salt marshes were baked so hard that they rang when trodden on. The water had long since subsided in the Terek and rapidly vanished and dried up in the ditches. The slimy banks of the pond near the village were trodden bare by the cattle and all day long you could hear the splashing of water and the shouting of girls and boys bathing. The sand-drifts and the reeds were already drying up in the steppes, and the cattle, lowing, ran into the fields in the day-time. The boars migrated into the distant reed-beds and to the hills beyond the Terek. Mosquitoes and gnats swarmed in thick clouds over the low lands and villages. The snow-peaks were hidden in grey mist. The air was rarefied and smoky. It was said that *abreks* had crossed the now shallow river and were prowling on this side of it. Every night the sun set in a glowing red blaze. It was the busiest time of the year. The villagers all swarmed in the melon-fields and the vineyards. The vineyards thickly overgrown with twining verdure lay in cool, deep shade. Everywhere between the broad translucent leaves, ripe, heavy, black clusters peeped out. Along the dusty road from the vineyards the creaking carts moved slowly, heaped up with black grapes. Clusters of them, crushed by the wheels, lay in the dirt. Boys and girls in smocks stained with grape-juice, with

grapes in their hands and mouths, ran after their mothers. On the road you continually came across tattered labourers with baskets of grapes on their powerful shoulders; Cossack maidens, veiled with kerchiefs to their eyes, drove bullocks harnessed to carts laden high with grapes. Soldiers who happened to meet these carts asked for grapes, and the maidens, clambering up without stopping their carts, would take an armful of grapes and drop them into the skirts of the soldiers' coats. In some homesteads they had already begun pressing the grapes; and the smell of the emptied skins filled the air. One saw the blood-red troughs in the pent-houses in the yards and Nogáy labourers with their trousers rolled up and their legs stained with the juice. Grunting pigs gorged themselves with the empty skins and rolled about in them. The flat roofs of the outhouses were all spread over with the dark amber clusters drying in the sun. Daws and magpies crowded round the roofs, picking the seeds and fluttering from one place to another.

The fruits of the year's labour were being merrily gathered in, and this year the fruit was unusually fine and plentiful.

In the shady green vineyards amid a sea of vines, laughter, songs, merriment, and the voices of women were to be heard on all sides, and glimpses of their bright-coloured garments could be seen.

Just at noon Maryánka was sitting in their vineyard in the shade of a peach-tree, getting out the family dinner from under an unharnessed cart. Opposite her, on a spread-out horse-cloth, sat the cornet (who had returned from the school) washing his hands by pouring water on them from a little jug. Her little brother, who had just come straight out of the pond, stood wiping his face with his wide sleeves, and gazed anxiously at his sister and his mother and breathed deeply, awaiting his dinner. The old mother, with her sleeves rolled up over her strong sunburnt arms,

was arranging grapes, dried fish, and clotted cream on a little low, circular Tartar table. The cornet wiped his hands, took off his cap, crossed himself, and moved nearer to the table. The boy seized the jug and eagerly began to drink. The mother and daughter crossed their legs under them and sat down by the table. Even in the shade it was intolerably hot. The air above the vineyard smelt unpleasant: the strong warm wind passing amid the branches brought no coolness, but only monotonously bent the tops of the pear, peach, and mulberry trees with which the vineyard was sprinkled. The cornet, having crossed himself once more, took a little jug of *chikhir* that stood behind him covered with a vine-leaf, and having had a drink from the mouth of the jug passed it to the old woman. He had nothing on over his shirt, which was unfastened at the neck and showed his shaggy muscular chest. His fine-featured cunning face looked cheerful; neither in his attitude nor in his words was his usual wiliness to be seen, he was cheerful and natural.

'Shall we finish the bit beyond the shed to-night?' he asked, wiping his wet beard.

'We'll manage it,' replied his wife, 'if only the weather does not hinder us. The Dëmkins have not half finished yet,' she added. 'Only Ústenka is at work there, wearing herself out.'

'What can you expect of them?' said the old man proudly.

'Here, have a drink, Maryánka dear!' said the old woman, passing the jug to the girl. 'God willing we'll have enough to pay for the wedding feast,' she added.

'That's not yet awhile,' said the cornet with a slight frown.

The girl hung her head.

'Why shouldn't we mention it?' said the old woman. 'the affair is settled, and the time is drawing near too,'

'Don't make plans beforehand,' said the cornet. 'Now we have the harvest to get in.'

'Have you seen Lukáshka's new horse?' asked the old woman. 'That which Dmítri Andréich Olénin gave him is gone—he's exchanged it.'

'No, I have not; but I spoke with the servant to-day,' said the cornet, 'and he said his master has again received a thousand rubles.'

'Rolling in riches, in short,' said the old woman.

The whole family felt cheerful and contented.

The work was progressing successfully. The grapes were more abundant and finer than they had expected.

After dinner Maryánka threw some grass to the oxen, folded her *besmet* for a pillow, and lay down under the wagon on the juicy down-trodden grass. She had on only a red kerchief over her head and a faded blue print smock, yet she felt unbearably hot. Her face was burning, and she did not know where to put her feet, her eyes were moist with sleepiness and weariness, her lips parted involuntarily, and her chest heaved heavily and deeply.

The busy time of year had begun a fortnight ago and the continuous heavy labour had filled the girl's life. At dawn she jumped up, washed her face with cold water, wrapped herself in a shawl, and ran out barefoot to see to the cattle. Then she hurriedly put on her shoes and her *besmet* and, taking a small bundle of bread, she harnessed the bullocks and drove away to the vineyards for the whole day. There she cut the grapes and carried the baskets with only an hour's interval for rest, and in the evening she returned to the village, bright and not tired, dragging the bullocks by a rope or driving them with a long stick. After attending to the cattle, she took some sunflower seeds in the wide sleeve of her smock and went to the corner of the street to crack them and have some fun with the other girls. But as soon as it was dusk she returned home, and after having supper with her parents and her brother in the dark outhouse, she went into the hut, healthy and free from care, and climbed

onto the oven, where half drowsing she listened to their lodger's conversation. As soon as he went away she would throw herself down on her bed and sleep soundly and quietly till morning. And so it went on day after day. She had not seen Lukáshka since the day of their betrothal, but calmly awaited the wedding. She had got used to their lodger and felt his intent looks with pleasure.

CHAPTER XXX

ALTHOUGH there was no escape from the heat and the mosquitoes swarmed in the cool shadow of the wagons, and her little brother tossing about beside her kept pushing her, Maryánka having drawn her kerchief over her head was just falling asleep, when suddenly their neighbour Ústenka came running towards her and, diving under the wagon, lay down beside her.

'Sleep, girls, sleep!' said Ústenka, making herself comfortable under the wagon. 'Wait a bit,' she exclaimed, 'this won't do!'

She jumped up, plucked some green branches, and stuck them through the wheels on both sides of the wagon and hung her *besmet* over them.

'Let me in,' she shouted to the little boy as she again crept under the wagon. 'Is this the place for a Cossack—with the girls? Go away!'

When alone under the wagon with her friend, Ústenka suddenly put both her arms round her, and clinging close to her began kissing her cheeks and neck.

'Darling, sweetheart,' she kept repeating, between bursts of shrill, clear laughter.

'Why, you've learnt it from grandad,' said Maryánka, struggling. 'Stop it!'

And they both broke into such peals of laughter that Maryánka's mother shouted to them to be quiet.

'Are you jealous?' asked Ústenka in a whisper.

'What humbug! Let me sleep. What have you come for?'

But Ústenka kept on, 'I say! But I wanted to tell you such a thing.'

Maryánka raised herself on her elbow and arranged the kerchief which had slipped off.

'Well, what is it?'

'I know something about your lodger!'

'There's nothing to know,' said Maryánka.

'Oh, you rogue of a girl!' said Ústenka, nudging her with her elbow and laughing. 'Won't tell anything. Does he come to you?'

'He does. What of that?' said Maryánka with a sudden blush.

'Now I'm a simple lass. I tell everybody. Why should I pretend?' said Ústenka, and her bright rosy face suddenly became pensive. 'Whom do I hurt? I love him, that's all about it.'

'Grandad, do you mean?'

'Well, yes!'

'And the sin?'

'Ah, Maryánka! When is one to have a good time if not while one's still free? When I marry a Cossack I shall bear children and shall have cares. There now, when you get married to Lukáshka not even a thought of joy will enter your head: children will come, and work!'

'Well? Some who are married live happily. It makes no difference!' Maryánka replied quietly.

'Do tell me just this once what has passed between you and Lukáshka?'

'What has passed? A match was proposed. Father put it off for a year, but now it's been settled and they'll marry us in autumn.'

'But what did he say to you?'

Maryánka smiled.

'What should he say? He said he loved me. He kept asking me to come to the vineyards with him.'

'Just see what pitch! But you didn't go, did you? And what a dare-devil he has become: the first among the braves. He makes merry out there in the army too! The other day our Kírka came home; he says: What a horse Lukáshka's got in exchange! But all the same I expect he frets after you. And what else did he say?'

'Must you know everything?' said Maryánka laughing. 'One night he came to my window tipsy, and asked me to let him in.'

'And you didn't let him?'

'Let him, indeed! Once I have said a thing I keep to it firm as a rock,' answered Maryánka seriously.

'A fine fellow! If he wanted her, no girl would refuse him.'

'Well, let him go to the others,' replied Maryánka proudly.

'You don't pity him?'

'I do pity him, but I'll have no nonsense. It is wrong.'

Ústenka suddenly dropped her head on her friend's breast, seized hold of her, and shook with smothered laughter. 'You silly fool!' she exclaimed, quite out of breath. 'You don't want to be happy,' and she began tickling Maryánka.

'Oh, leave off!' said Maryánka, screaming and laughing. 'You've crushed Lazútká.'

'Hark at those young devils! Quite frisky! Not tired yet!' came the old woman's sleepy voice from the wagon.

'Don't want happiness,' repeated Ústenka in a whisper, insistently. 'But you are lucky, that you are! How they love you! You are so crusty, and yet they love you. Ah, if I were in your place I'd soon turn the lodger's head! I noticed him when you were at our house. He was ready to eat you with his eyes. What things grandad has given me! And yours they say is the richest of the Russians. His orderly says they have serfs of their own.'

Maryánka raised herself, and after thinking a moment, smiled.

'Do you know what he once told me: the lodger I mean?' she said, biting a bit of grass. 'He said, I'd like to be Lukáshka the Cossack, or your brother Lazútka —. What do you think he meant?'

'Oh, just chattering what came into his head, answered Ústenka. 'What does mine not say! Just as if he was possessed!'

Maryánka dropped her head on her folded *besmet*, threw her arm over Ústenka's shoulder, and shut her eyes.

'He wanted to come and work in the vineyard to-day: father invited him,' she said, and after a short silence she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE sun had come out from behind the pear-tree that had shaded the wagon, and even through the branches that Ústenka had fixed up it scorched the faces of the sleeping girls. Maryánka woke up and began arranging the kerchief on her head. Looking about her, beyond the pear-tree she noticed their lodger, who with his gun on his shoulder stood talking to her father. She nudged Ústenka and smilingly pointed him out to her.

'I went yesterday and didn't find a single one,' Olénin was saying as he looked about uneasily, not seeing Maryánka through the branches.

'Ah, you should go out there in that direction, go right as by compasses, there in a disused vineyard denominated as the Waste, hares are always to be found,' said the cornet, having at once changed his manner of speech.

'A fine thing to go looking for hares in these busy times! You had better come and help us, and do some work with the girls,' the old woman said merrily. 'Now then, girls, up with you!' she cried.

Maryánka and Ústenka under the cart were whispering and could hardly restrain their laughter.

Since it had become known that Olénin had given a horse worth fifty rubles to Lukáshka, his hosts had become more amiable and the cornet in particular saw with pleasure his daughter's growing intimacy with Olénin.

'But I don't know how to do the work,' replied Olénin, trying not to look through the green branches under the wagon where he had now noticed Maryánka's blue smock and red kerchief.

'Come, I'll give you some peaches,' said the old woman.

'It's only according to the ancient Cossack hospitality. It's her old woman's silliness,' said the cornet, explaining and apparently correcting his wife's words. 'In Russia, I expect, it's not so much peaches as pineapple jam and preserves you have been accustomed to eat at your pleasure.'

'So you say hares are to be found in the disused vineyard?' asked Olénin. 'I will go there,' and throwing a hasty glance through the green branches he raised his cap and disappeared between the regular rows of green vines.

The sun had already sunk behind the fence of the vineyards, and its broken rays glittered through the translucent leaves when Olénin returned to his host's vineyard. The wind was falling and a cool freshness was beginning to spread around. By some instinct Olénin recognized from afar Maryánka's blue smock among the rows of vine, and, picking grapes on his way, he approached her. His highly excited dog also now and then seized a low-hanging cluster of grapes in his slobbering mouth. Maryánka, her face flushed, her sleeves rolled up, and her kerchief down below her chin, was rapidly cutting the heavy clusters and laying them in a basket. Without letting go of the vine she had hold of, she stopped to smile pleasantly at him

and resumed her work. Olénin drew near and threw his gun behind his back to have his hands free. 'Where are your people? May God aid you! Are you alone?' he meant to say but did not say, and only raised his cap in silence.

He was ill at ease alone with Maryánka, but as if purposely to torment himself he went up to her.

'You'll be shooting the women with your gun like that,' said Maryánka.

'No, I shan't shoot them.'

They were both silent.

Then after a pause she said: 'You should help me.'

He took out his knife and began silently to cut off the clusters. He reached from under the leaves low down a thick bunch weighing about three pounds the grapes of which grew so close that they flattened each other for want of space. He showed it to Maryánka.

'Must they all be cut? Isn't this one too green?'

'Give it here.'

Their hands touched. Olénin took her hand, and she looked at him smiling.

'Are you going to be married soon?' he asked.

She did not answer, but turned away with a stern look.

'Do you love Lukáshka?'

'What's that to you?'

'I envy him!'

'Very likely!'

'No really. You are so beautiful!'

And he suddenly felt terribly ashamed of having said it, so commonplace did the words seem to him. He flushed, lost control of himself, and seized both her hands.

'Whatever I am, I'm not for you. Why do you make fun of me?' replied Maryánka, but her look showed how certainly she knew he was not making fun. ♣

'Making fun? If you only knew how I ——'

The words sounded still more commonplace, they accorded still less with what he felt, but yet he continued, 'I don't know what I would not do for you ——'

'Leave me alone, you pitch!'

But her face, her shining eyes, her swelling bosom, her shapely legs, said something quite different. It seemed to him that she understood how petty were all things he had said, but that she was superior to such considerations. It seemed to him she had long known all he wished and was not able to tell her, but wanted to hear how he would say it. 'And how can she help knowing,' he thought, 'since I only want to tell her all that she herself is? But she does not wish to understand, does not wish to reply.'

'Hullo!' suddenly came Ūstenka's high voice from behind the vine at no great distance, followed by her shrill laugh. 'Come and help me, Dmítri Andréich. I am all alone,' she cried, thrusting her round, naïve little face through the vines.

Olénin did not answer nor move from his place.

Maryánka went on cutting and continually looked up at Olénin. He was about to say something, but stopped, shrugged his shoulders and, having jerked up his gun, walked out of the vineyard with rapid strides.

CHAPTER XXXII

He stopped once or twice, listening to the ringing laughter of Maryánka and Ūstenka who, having come together, were shouting something. Olénin spent the whole evening hunting in the forest and returned home at dusk without having killed anything. When crossing the road he noticed her open the door of the outhouse, and her blue smock showed through it. He called to Vanyúsha very loud so as to let her know that he was back, and then sat down in the porch in his usual place. His hosts now returned from the vineyard;

they came out of the outhouse and into their hut, but did not ask him in. Maryánka went twice out of the gate. Once in the twilight it seemed to him that she was looking at him. He eagerly followed her every movement, but could not make up his mind to approach her. When she disappeared into the hut he left the porch and began pacing up and down the yard, but Maryánka did not come out again. Olénin spent the whole sleepless night out in the yard listening to every sound in his hosts' hut. He heard them talking early in the evening, heard them having their supper and pulling out their cushions, and going to bed; he heard Maryánka laughing at something, and then heard everything growing gradually quiet. The cornet and his wife talked a while in whispers, and someone was breathing. Olénin re-entered his hut. Vanyúsha lay asleep in his clothes. Olénin envied him, and again went out to pace the yard, always expecting something, but no one came, no one moved, and he only heard the regular breathing of three people. He knew Maryánka's breathing and listened to it and to the beating of his own heart. In the village everything was quiet. The waning moon rose late, and the deep-breathing cattle in the yard became more visible as they lay down and slowly rose. Olénin angrily asked himself, 'What is it I want?' but could not tear himself away from the enchantment of the night. Suddenly he thought he distinctly heard the floor creak and the sound of footsteps in his hosts' hut. He rushed to the door, but all was silent again except for the sound of regular breathing, and in the yard the buffalo-cow, after a deep sigh, again moved, rose on her foreknees and then on her feet, swished her tail, and something splashed steadily on the dry clay ground; then she lay down again in the dim moonlight. He asked himself: 'What am I to do?' and definitely decided to go to bed, but again he heard a sound, and in his imagination there arose the image of Maryánka coming out

into this moonlit misty night, and again he rushed to her window and again heard the sound of footsteps. Not till just before dawn did he go up to her window and push at the shutter and then run to the door, and this time he really heard Maryánka's deep breathing and her footsteps. He took hold of the latch and knocked. The floor hardly creaked under the bare cautious footsteps which approached the door. The latch clicked, the door creaked, and he noticed a faint smell of marjoram and pumpkin, and Maryánka's whole figure appeared in the doorway. He saw her only for an instant in the moonlight. She slammed the door and, muttering something, ran lightly back again. Olénin began rapping softly but nothing responded. He ran to the window and listened. Suddenly he was startled by a shrill, squeaky man's voice.

'Fine!' exclaimed a rather small young Cossack in a white cap, coming across the yard close to Olénin. 'I saw . . . fine!'

Olénin recognized Nazárka, and was silent, not knowing what to do or say.

'Fine! I'll go and tell them at the office, and I'll tell her father! That's a fine cornet's daughter! One's not enough for her.'

'What do you want of me, what are you after?' uttered Olénin.

'Nothing; only I'll tell them at the office.'

Nazárka spoke very loud, and evidently did so intentionally, adding: 'Just see what a clever cadet!'

Olénin trembled and grew pale.

'Come here, here!' He seized the Cossack firmly by the arm and drew him towards his hut.

'Nothing happened, she did not let me in, and I too mean no harm. She is an honest girl ——'

'Eh, disa~~uss~~ ——'

'Yes, but all the same I'll give you something now. Wait a bit!'

Nazárka said nothing. Olénin ran into his hut and brought out ten rubles, which he gave to the Cossack.

‘Nothing happened, but still I was to blame, so I give this!—— Only for God’s sake don’t let anyone know, for nothing happened . . .’

‘I wish you joy,’ said Nazárka laughing, and went away.

Nazárka had come to the village that night at Lukáshka’s bidding to find a place to hide a stolen horse, and now, passing by on his way home, had heard the sound of footsteps. When he returned next morning to his company he bragged to his chum, and told him how cleverly he had got ten rubles. Next morning Olénin met his hosts and they knew nothing about the events of the night. He did not speak to Maryánka, and she only laughed a little when she looked at him. Next night he also passed without sleep, vainly wandering about the yard. The day after he purposely spent shooting, and in the evening he went to see Belétski to escape from his own thoughts. He was afraid of himself, and promised himself not to go to his hosts’ hut any more.

That night he was roused by the sergeant-major. His company was ordered to start at once on a raid. Olénin was glad this had happened, and thought he would not again return to the village.

The raid lasted four days. The commander, who was a relative of Olénin’s, wished to see him and offered to let him remain with the staff, but this Olénin declined. He found that he could not live away from the village, and asked to be allowed to return to it. For having taken part in the raid he received a soldier’s cross, which he had formerly greatly desired. Now he was quite indifferent about it, and even more indifferent about his promotion, the order for which had still not arrived. Accompanied by Ványúsha he rode back to the cordon without any accident several hours in advance of the rest of the company. He spent

the whole evening in his porch watching Maryánka, and he again walked about the yard, without aim or thought, all night.

CHAPTER XXXIII

It was late when he awoke the next day. His hosts were no longer in. He did not go shooting, but now took up a book, and now went out into the porch, and now again re-entered the hut and lay down on the bed. Vanyúsha thought he was ill.

Towards evening Olénin got up, resolutely began writing, and wrote on till late at night. He wrote a letter, but did not post it because he felt that no one would have understood what he wanted to say, and besides it was not necessary that anyone but himself should understand it. This is what he wrote:

‘I receive letters of condolence from Russia. They are afraid that I shall perish, buried in these wilds. They say about me: “He will become coarse; he will be behind the times in everything; he will take to drink, and who knows but that he may marry a Cossack girl.” It was not for nothing, they say, that Ermólov¹ declared: “Anyone serving in the Caucasus for ten years either becomes a confirmed drunkard or marries a loose woman.” How terrible! Indeed it won’t do for me to ruin myself when I might have the great happiness of even becoming the Countess B——’s husband, or a Court chamberlain, or a *Maréchal de noblesse* of my district. Oh, how repulsive and pitiable you all seem to me! You do not know what happiness is and what life is! One must taste life once in all its natural beauty, must see and understand what I see every day before me—those eternally unapproachable snowy peaks, and a majestic woman in that primitive beauty in which the first woman must have come from her creator’s hands—and then it becomes clear who is

¹ See note on p. 75.

ruining himself and who is living truly or falsely—you or I. If you only knew how despicable and pitiable you, in your delusions, seem to me! When I picture to myself—in place of my hut, my forests, and my love—those drawing-rooms, those women with their pomatum-greased hair eked out with false curls, those unnaturally grimacing lips, those hidden, feeble, distorted limbs, and that chatter of obligatory drawing-room conversation which has no right to the name—I feel unendurably revolted. I then see before me those obtuse faces, those rich eligible girls whose looks seem to say: “It’s all right, you may come near though I am rich and eligible”—and that arranging and rearranging of seats, that shameless match-making and that eternal tittle-tattle and pretence; those rules—with whom to shake hands, to whom only to nod, with whom to converse (and all this done deliberately with a conviction of its inevitability), that continual ennui in the blood passing on from generation to generation. Try to understand or believe just this one thing: you not only see and comprehend what truth and beauty are, and all that you now say and think and all your wishes for me and for yourselves will fly to atoms! Happiness is being with nature, seeing her, and conversing with her. “He may even (God forbid) marry a common Cossack girl, and be quite lost socially” I can imagine them saying of me with sincere pity! Yet the one thing I desire is to be quite “lost” in your sense of the word. I wish to marry a Cossack girl, and dare not because it would be a height of happiness of which I am unworthy.

“Three months have passed since I first saw the Cossack girl, Maryánka. The views and prejudices of the world I had left were still fresh in me. I did not then believe that I could love that woman. I delighted in her beauty just as I delighted in the beauty of the mountains and the sky, nor could I help delighting in her, for she is as beautiful as they. I found that the

sight of her beauty had become a necessity of my life and I began asking myself whether I did not love her. But I could find nothing within myself at all like love as I had imagined it to be. Mine was not the restlessness of loneliness and desire for marriage, nor was it platonic, still less a carnal love such as I have experienced. I needed only to see her, to hear her, to know that she was near—and if I was not happy, I was at peace.

‘After an evening gathering at which I met her and touched her, I felt that between that woman and myself there existed an indissoluble though unacknowledged bond against which I could not struggle, yet I did struggle. I asked myself: “Is it possible to love a woman who will never understand the profoundest interests of my life? Is it possible to love a woman simply for her beauty, to love the statue of a woman?” But I was already in love with her, though I did not yet trust to my feelings.

‘After that evening when I first spoke to her our relations changed. Before that she had been to me an extraneous but majestic object of external nature: but since then she has become a human being. I began to meet her, to talk to her, and sometimes to go to work for her father and to spend whole evenings with them, and in this intimate intercourse she remained still in my eyes just as pure, inaccessible, and majestic. She always responded with equal calm, pride, and cheerful equanimity. Sometimes she was friendly, but generally her every look, every word, and every movement expressed equanimity—not contemptuous, but crushing and bewitching. Every day with a feigned smile on my lips I tried to play a part, and with torments of passion and desire in my heart I spoke banteringly to her. She saw that I was dissembling, but looked straight at me cheerfully and simply. This position became unbearable. I wished not to deceive her but to tell her all I thought and felt.

I was extremely agitated. We were in the vineyard when I began to tell her of my love, in words I am now ashamed to remember. I am ashamed because I ought not to have dared to speak so to her because she stood far above such words and above the feeling they were meant to express. I said no more, but from that day my position has been intolerable. I did not wish to demean myself by continuing our former flippant relations, and at the same time I felt that I had not yet reached the level of straight and simple relations with her. I asked myself despairingly, "What am I to do?" In foolish dreams I imagined her now as my mistress and now as my wife, but rejected both ideas with disgust. To make her a wanton woman would be dreadful. It would be murder. To turn her into a fine lady, the wife of Dmítri Andréich Olénin, like a Cossack woman here who is married to one of our officers, would be still worse. Now could I turn Cossack like Lukáshka, and steal horses, get drunk on *chikhir*, sing rollicking songs, kill people, and when drunk climb in at her window for the night without a thought of who and what I am, it would be different: then we might understand one another and I might be happy.

'I tried to throw myself into that kind of life but was still more conscious of my own weakness and artificiality. I cannot forget myself and my complex, distorted past, and my future appears to me still more hopeless. Every day I have before me the distant snowy mountains and this majestic, happy woman. But not for me is the only happiness possible in the world; I cannot have this woman! What is most terrible and yet sweetest in my condition is that I feel that I understand her but that she will never understand me; not because she is inferior: on the contrary she ought not to understand me. She is happy, she is like nature: consistent, calm, and self-contained; and I, a weak distorted being, want her to understand

my deformity and my torments! I have not slept at night, but have aimlessly passed under her windows not rendering account to myself of what was happening to me. On the 18th our company started on a raid, and I spent three days away from the village. I was sad and apathetic, the usual songs, cards, drinking-bouts, and talk of rewards in the regiment, were more repulsive to me than usual. Yesterday I returned home and saw her, my hut, Daddy Eróshka, and the snowy mountains, from my porch, and was seized by such a strong, new feeling of joy that I understood it all. I love this woman; I feel real love for the first and only time in my life. I know what has befallen me. I do not fear to be degraded by this feeling, I am not ashamed of my love, I am proud of it. It is not my fault that I love. It has come about against my will. I tried to escape from my love by self-renunciation, and tried to devise a joy in the Cossack Lukáshka's and Maryánka's love, but thereby only stirred up my own love and jealousy. This is not the ideal, the so-called exalted love which I have known before; not that sort of attachment in which you admire your own love and feel that the source of your emotion is within yourself and do everything yourself. I have felt that too. It is still less a desire for enjoyment: it is something different. Perhaps in her I love nature: the personification of all that is beautiful in nature; but yet I am not acting by my own will, but some elemental force loves through me; the whole of God's world, all nature, presses this love into my soul and says, "Love her." I love her not with my mind or my imagination, but with my whole being. Loving her I feel myself to be an integral part of all God's joyous world. I wrote before about the new convictions to which my solitary life had brought me, but no one knows with what labour they shaped themselves within me and with what joy I realized them and saw a new way of life opening out before me; nothing

was dearer to me than those convictions . . . Well! . . . love has come and neither they nor any regrets for them remain! It is even difficult for me to believe that I could prize such a one-sided, cold, and abstract state of mind. Beauty came and scattered to the winds all that laborious inward toil, and no regret remains for what has vanished! Self-renunciation is all nonsense and absurdity! That is pride, a refuge from well-merited unhappiness, and salvation from the envy of others' happiness: "Live for others, and do good!" —Why? when in my soul there is only love for myself and the desire to love her and to live her life with her? Not for others, not for Lukáshka, I now desire happiness. I do not now love those others. Formerly I should have told myself that this is wrong. I should have tormented myself with the questions: What will become of her, of me, and of Lukáshka? Now I don't care. I do not live my own life, there is something stronger than me which directs me. I suffer; but formerly I was dead and only now do I live. To-day I will go to their house and tell her everything.'

†

CHAPTER XXXIV

LATE that evening, after writing this letter, Olénin went to his hosts' hut. The old woman was sitting on a bench behind the oven unwinding cocoons. Maryánka with her head uncovered sat sewing by the light of a candle. On seeing Olénin she jumped up, took her kerchief and stepped to the oven.

'Maryánka dear,' said her mother, 'won't you sit here with me a bit?'

'No, I'm bareheaded,' she replied, and sprang up on the oven.

Olénin could only see a knee, and one of her shapely legs hanging down from the oven. He treated the old woman to tea. She treated her guest to clotted cream

which she sent Maryánka to fetch. But having put a plateful on the table Maryánka again sprang on the oven from whence Olénin felt her eyes upon him. They talked about household matters. Granny Ulitka became animated and went into raptures of hospitality. She brought Olénin preserved grapes and a grape tart and some of her best wine, and pressed him to eat and drink with the rough yet proud hospitality of country folk, only found among those who produce their bread by the labour of their own hands. The old woman, who had at first struck Olénin so much by her rudeness, now often touched him by her simple tenderness towards her daughter.

‘Yes, we need not offend the Lord by grumbling! We have enough of everything, thank God. We have pressed sufficient *chikhir* and have preserved and shall sell three or four barrels of grapes and have enough left to drink. Don’t be in a hurry to leave us. We will make merry together at the wedding.’

‘And when is the wedding to be?’ asked Olénin, feeling his blood suddenly rush to his face while his heart beat irregularly and painfully.

He heard a movement on the oven and the sound of seeds being cracked.

‘Well, you know, it ought to be next week. We are quite ready,’ replied the old woman, as simply and quietly as though Olénin did not exist. ‘I have prepared and have procured everything for Maryánka. We will give her away properly. Only there’s one thing not quite right. Our Lukáshka has been running rather wild. He has been too much on the spree! He’s up to tricks! The other day a Cossack came here from his company and said he had been to Nogáy.’

‘He must mind he does not get caught,’ said Olénin.

‘Yes, that’s what I tell him. “Mind, Lukáshka, don’t you get into mischief. Well of course a young fellow naturally wants to cut a dash. But there’s a time for

everything. Well, you've captured or stolen something and killed an *abrek*! Well, you're a fine fellow! But now you should live quietly for a bit, or else there'll be trouble.'"

'Yes, I saw him a time or two in the division, he was always merry-making. He has sold another horse,' said Olénin, and glanced towards the oven.

A pair of large, dark, and hostile eyes glittered as they gazed severely at him.

He became ashamed of what he had said. 'What of it? He does no one any harm,' suddenly remarked Maryánka. 'He makes merry with his own money,' and lowering her legs she jumped down from the oven and went out banging the door.

Olénin followed her with his eyes as long as she was in the hut, and then looked at the door and waited, understanding nothing of what Granny Ulítka was telling him.

A few minutes later some visitors arrived: an old man, Granny Ulítka's brother, with Daddy Eróshka, and following them came Maryánka and Ústenka.

'Good evening,' squeaked Ústenka. 'Still on holiday?' she added, turning to Olénin.

'Yes, still on holiday,' he replied, and felt, he did not know why, ashamed and ill at ease.

He wished to go away but could not. It also seemed to him impossible to remain silent. The old man helped him by asking for a drink, and they had a drink. Olénin drank with Eróshka, with the other Cossack, and again with Eróshka, and the more he drank the heavier was his heart. But the two old men grew merry. The girls climbed onto the oven, where they sat whispering and looking at the men, who drank till it was late. Olénin did not talk, but drank more than the others. The Cossacks were shouting. The old woman would not let them have any more *óikhir*, and at last turned them out. The girls laughed at Daddy Eróshka, and it was past ten when they all went out

into the porch. The old men invited themselves to finish their merry-making at Olénin's. Ústenka ran off home and Eróshka led the old Cossack to Van-yúsha. The old woman went out to tidy up the shed. Maryánka remained alone in the hut. Olénin felt fresh and joyous, as if he had only just woke up. He noticed everything, and having let the old men pass ahead he turned back to the hut where Maryánka was preparing for bed. He went up to her and wished to say something, but his voice broke. She moved away from him, sat down cross-legged on her bed in the corner, and looked at him silently with wild and frightened eyes. She was evidently afraid of him. Olénin felt this. He felt sorry and ashamed of himself, and at the same time proud and pleased that he aroused even that feeling in her.

'Maryánka!' he said, 'Will you never take pity on me? I can't tell you how I love you.'

She moved still farther away.

'Just hear how the wine is speaking! . . . You'll get nothing from me!'

'No, it is not the wine. Don't marry Lukáshka. I will marry you.' ('What am I saying,' he thought as he uttered these words. 'Shall I be able to say the same to-morrow?' 'Yes, I shall, I am sure I shall, and I will repeat them now,' replied an inner voice.)

'Will you marry me?'

She looked at him seriously and her fear seemed to have passed.

'Maryánka, I shall go out of my mind! I am not myself. I will do whatever you command,' and madly tender words came from his lips of their own accord.

'Now then, what are you drivelling about?' she interrupted, suddenly seizing the arm he was stretching towards her. She did not push his arm away but pressed it firmly with her strong hard fingers. 'Do gentlemen marry Cossack girls? Go away!'

'But will you? Everything . . .'

'And what shall we do with Lukáshka?' said she, laughing.

He snatched away the arm she was holding and firmly embraced her young body, but she sprang away like a fawn and ran barefoot into the porch: Olénin came to his senses and was terrified at himself. He again felt himself inexpressibly vile compared to her, yet not repenting for an instant of what he had said he went home, and without even glancing at the old men who were drinking in his room he lay down and fell asleep more soundly than he had done for a long time.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE next day was a holiday. In the evening all the villagers, their holiday clothes shining in the sunset, were out in the street. That season more wine than usual had been produced, and the people were now free from their labours. In a month the Cossacks were to start on a campaign and in many families preparations were being made for weddings.

Most of the people were standing in the square in front of the Cossack Government Office and near the two shops, in one of which cakes and pumpkin seeds were sold, in the other kerchiefs and cotton prints. On the earth-embankment of the office-building sat or stood the old men in sober grey, or black coats without gold trimmings or any kind of ornament. They conversed among themselves quietly in measured tones, about the harvest, about the young folk, about village affairs, and about old times, looking with dignified equanimity at the younger generation. Passing by them, the women and girls stopped and bent their heads. The young Cossacks respectfully slackened their pace and raised their caps, holding them for a while over their heads. The old men then stopped speaking. Some of them watched the passers-

by severely, others kindly, and in their turn slowly took off their caps and put them on again.

The Cossack girls had not yet started dancing their *khorovóds*,¹ but having gathered in groups, in their bright-coloured *beshmets* with white kerchiefs on their heads pulled down to their eyes, they sat either on the ground or on the earth-banks about the huts sheltered from the oblique rays of the sun, and laughed and chattered in their ringing voices. Little boys and girls playing in the square sent their balls high up into the clear sky, and ran about squealing and shouting. The half-grown girls had started dancing their *khorovóds*, and were timidly singing in their thin shrill voices. Clerks, lads not in the service, or home for the holiday, bright faced and wearing smart white or new red Circassian gold-trimmed coats, went about arm in arm in twos or threes from one group of women or girls to another, and stopped joking and chatting with the Cossack girls. The Armenian shopkeeper, in a gold-trimmed coat of fine blue cloth, stood at the open door through which piles of folded bright-coloured kerchiefs were visible and, conscious of his own importance and with the pride of an oriental tradesman, waited for customers. Two red-bearded, bare-footed Chéchens, who had come from beyond the Terek to see the fête, sat on their heels outside the house of a friend, negligently smoking their little pipes and occasionally spitting, watching the villagers and exchanging remarks with one another in their rapid guttural speech. Occasionally a workaday-looking soldier in an old overcoat passed across the square among the bright-clad girls. Here and there the songs of tipsy Cossacks who were merry-making could already be heard. All the huts were closed; the porches had been scrubbed clean the day before. Even the old women were out in the street, which was

¹• The *khorovód* is a ring formed by the girls, who move round in a circle singing.

everywhere sprinkled with pumpkin and melon seed-shells. The air was warm and still, the sky deep and clear. Beyond the roofs the dead-white mountain range, which seemed very near, was turning rosy in the glow of the evening sun. Now and then from the other side of the river came the distant roar of a cannon, but above the village, mingling with one another, floated all sorts of merry holiday sounds.

Olénin had been pacing the yard all that morning hoping to see Maryánka. But she, having put on holiday clothes, went to Mass at the chapel and afterwards sat with the other girls on an earth-embankment cracking seeds; sometimes again, together with her companions, she ran home, and each time gave the lodger a bright and kindly look. Olénin felt afraid to address her playfully or in the presence of others. He wished to finish telling her what he had begun to say the night before, and to get her to give him a definite answer. He waited for another moment like that of yesterday evening, but the moment did not come, and he felt that he could not remain any longer in this uncertainty. She went out into the street again, and after waiting awhile he too went out and without knowing where he was going he followed her. He passed by the corner where she was sitting in her shining blue satin *besbmet*, and with an aching heart he heard behind him the girls laughing.

Belétski's hut looked out onto the square. As Olénin was passing it he heard Belétski's voice calling to him, 'Come in,' and in he went.

After a short talk they both sat down by the window and were soon joined by Eróshka, who entered dressed in a new *besbmet* and sat down on the floor beside them.

'There, that's the aristocratic party,' said Belétski, pointing with his cigarette to a brightly coloured group at the corner. 'Mine is there too. Do you see her? in red. That's a new *besbmet*.' 'Why don't you

start the *khorovód*?' he shouted, leaning out of the window. 'Wait a bit, and then when it grows dark let us go too. Then we will invite them to Ústenka's. We must arrange a ball for them!'

'And I will come to Ústenka's,' said Olénin in a decided tone. 'Will Maryánka be there?'

'Yes, she'll be there. Do come!' said Belétski, without the least surprise. 'But isn't it a pretty picture?' he added, pointing to the motley crowds.

'Yes, very!' Olénin assented, trying to appear indifferent. 'Holidays of this kind,' he added, 'always make me wonder why all these people should suddenly be contented and jolly. To-day for instance, just because it happens to be the fifteenth of the month, everything is festive. Eyes and faces and voices and movements and garments, and the air and the sun, are all in a holiday mood. And we no longer have any holidays!'

'Yes,' said Belétski, who did not like such reflections. 'And why are you not drinking, old fellow?' he said, turning to Eróshka.

Eróshka winked at Olénin, pointing to Belétski. 'Eh, he's a proud one that *kunak* of yours,' he said.

Belétski raised his glass. '*Allah birdy*' he said, emptying it. (*Allah birdy*, 'God has given!'—the usual greeting of Caucasians when drinking together.)

'*Sau bul*' ('Your health'), answered Eróshka smiling, and emptied his glass.

'Speaking of holidays!' he said, turning to Olénin as he rose and looked out of the window, 'What sort of holiday is that! You should have seen them make merry in the old days! The women used to come out in their gold-trimmed *sarafáns*.¹ Two rows of gold coins hanging round their necks and gold-cloth diadems on their heads, and when they passed they made a noise, "flu, flu," with their dresses. Every

¹ A kind of gored dress worn over a blouse of different material.

woman looked like a princess. Sometimes they'd come out, a whole herd of them, and begin singing songs so that the air seemed to rumble, and they went on making merry all night. And the Cossacks would roll out a barrel into the yards and sit down and drink till break of day, or they would go hand-in-hand sweeping the village. Whoever they met they seized and took along with them, and went from house to house. Sometimes they used to make merry for three days on end. Father used to come home—I still remember it—quite red and swollen, without a cap, having lost everything: he'd come and lie down. Mother knew what to do: she would bring him some fresh caviar and a little *chikhir* to sober him up, and would herself run about in the village looking for his cap. Then he'd sleep for two days! That's the sort of fellows they were then! But now what are they?"

"Well, and the girls in the *sarafáns*, did they make merry all by themselves?" asked Belétski.

"Yes, they did! Sometimes Cossacks would come on foot or on horse and say, "Let's break up the *khorovóds*," and they'd go, but the girls would take up cudgels. Carnival week, some young fellow would come galloping up, and they'd cudgel his horse and cudgel him too. But he'd break through, seize the one he loved, and carry her off. And his sweetheart would love him to his heart's content! Yes, the girls in those days they were regular queens!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

Just then two men rode out of the side street into the square. One of them was Nazárka. The other, Lukáshka, sat slightly sideways on his well-fed bay Kabardá horse which stepped lightly over the hard road jerking its beautiful head with its fine glossy mane. The well-adjusted gun in its cover, the pistol at his back, and the cloak rolled up behind his saddle

showed that Lukáška had not come from a peaceful place or from one near by. The smart way in which he sat a little sideways on his horse, the careless motion with which he touched the horse under its belly with his whip, and especially his half-closed black eyes, glistening as he looked proudly around him, all expressed the conscious strength and self-confidence of youth. 'Ever seen as fine a lad?' his eyes, looking from side to side, seemed to say. The elegant horse with its silver ornaments and trappings, the weapons, and the handsome Cossack himself attracted the attention of everyone in the square. Nazárka, lean and short, was much less well dressed. As he rode past the old men, Lukáška paused and raised his curly white sheepskin cap above his closely cropped black head.

'Well, have you carried off many Nogáy horses?' asked a lean old man with a frowning, lowering look.

'Have you counted them, Grandad, that you ask?' replied Lukáška, turning away.

'That's all very well, but you need not take my lad along with you,' the old man muttered with a still darker frown.

'Just see the old devil, he knows everything,' muttered Lukáška to himself, and a worried expression came over his face; but then, noticing a corner where a number of Cossack girls were standing, he turned his horse towards them.

'Good evening, girls!' he shouted in his powerful, resonant voice, suddenly checking his horse. 'You've grown old without me, you witches!' and he laughed.

'Good evening, Lukáška! Good evening, laddie!' the merry voices answered. 'Have you brought much money? Buy some sweets for the girls! . . . Have you come for long? True enough it's long since we saw you. . . .'

Nazárka and I have just flown across to make a

night of it,' replied Lukáshka, raising his whip and riding straight at the girls.

'Why, Maryánka has quite forgotten you,' said Ústenka, nudging Maryánka with her elbow and breaking into a shrill laugh.

Maryánka moved away from the horse and throwing back her head calmly looked at the Cossack with her large sparkling eyes.

'True enough you have not been for a long time! Why are you trampling us under your horse?' she remarked dryly, and turned away.

Lukáshka had appeared particular merry. His face shone with audacity and joy. Obviously staggered by Maryánka's cold reply he suddenly knitted his brow.

'Step up on my stirrup and I'll carry you away to the mountains, Mammy!' he suddenly exclaimed, and as if to disperse his dark thoughts he caracoled among the girls. Stooping down towards Maryánka he said, 'I'll kiss, oh, how I'll kiss you! . . .'

Maryánka's eyes met his and she suddenly blushed and stepped back.

'Oh, bother you! you'll crush my feet,' she said, and bending her head looked at her well-shaped feet in their tightly fitting light blue stockings with clocks and her new red slippers trimmed with narrow silver braid.

Lukáshka turned towards Ústenka, and Maryánka sat down next to a woman with a baby in her arms. The baby stretched his plump little hands towards the girl and seized a necklace string that hung down onto her blue *beshtmet*. Maryánka bent towards the child and glanced at Lukáshka from the corner of her eyes. Lukáshka just then was getting out from under his coat, from the pocket of his black *beshtmet*, a bundle of sweetmeats and seeds.

'There, I give them to all of you,' he said, handing the bundle to Ústenka and smiling at Maryánka.

A confused expression again appeared on the girl's face. It was as though a mist gathered over her

beautiful eyes. She drew her kerchief down below her lips, and leaning her head over the fair-skinned face of the baby that still held her by her coin necklace she suddenly began to kiss it greedily. The baby pressed his little hands against the girl's high breasts, and opening his toothless mouth screamed loudly.

'You're smothering the boy!' said the little one's mother, taking him away; and she unfastened her *besmet* to give him the breast. 'You'd better have a chat with the young fellow.'

'I'll only go and put up my horse and then Nazárka and I will come back; we'll make merry all night,' said Lukáshka, touching his horse with his whip and riding away from the girls.

Turning into a side street, he and Nazárka rode up to two huts that stood side by side.

'Here we are all right, old fellow! Be quick and come soon!' called Lukáshka to his comrade, dismounting in front of one of the huts; then he carefully led his horse in at the gate of the wattle fence of his own home.

'How d'you do, Stëpka?' he said to his dumb sister, who, smartly dressed like the others, came in from the street to take his horse; and he made signs to her to take the horse to the hay, but not to unsaddle it.

The dumb girl made her usual humming noise, smacked her lips as she pointed to the horse and kissed it on the nose, as much as to say that she loved it and that it was a fine horse.

'How d'you do, mother? How is it that you have not gone out yet?' shouted Lukáshka, holding his gun in place as he mounted the steps of the porch.

His old mother opened the door.

'Dear me! I never expected, never thought, you'd come,' said the old woman. 'Why, Kírka said you wouldn't be here.'

'Go and bring some *chikhir*, mother. Nazárka is coming here and we will celebrate the feast day.'

'Directly, Lukáshka, directly!' answered the old woman. 'Our women are making merry. I expect our dumb one has gone too.'

She took her keys and hurriedly went to the outhouse.

Nazárka, after putting up his horse and taking the gun off his shoulder, returned to Lukáshka's house and went in.

CHAPTER XXXVII

'YOUR health!' said Lukáshka, taking from his mother's hands a cup filled to the brim with *chikhir* and carefully raising it to his bowed head.

'A bad business!' said Nazárka. 'You heard how Daddy Burlák said, "Have you stolen many horses?" He seems to know!'

'A regular wizard!' Lukáshka replied shortly. 'But what of it!' he added, tossing his head. 'They are across the river by now. Go and find them!'

'Still it's a bad lookout.'

'What's a bad lookout? Go and take some *chikhir* to him to-morrow and nothing will come of it. Now let's make merry. Drink!' shouted Lukáshka, just in the tone in which old Eróshka uttered the word. 'We'll go out into the street and make merry with the girls. You go and get some honey; or no, I'll send our dumb wench. We'll make merry till morning.'

Nazárka smiled.

'Are we stopping here long?' he asked.

'Till we've had a bit of fun. Run and get some vodka. Here's the money.'

Nazárka ran off obediently to get the vodka from Yámka's.

Daddy Eróshka and Ergushóv, like birds of prey, scenting where the merry-making was going on, tumbled into the hut one after the other, both tipsy.

'Bring us another half-pail,' shouted Lukáshka to his mother, by way of reply to their greeting.

'Now then, tell us where did you steal them, you devil?' shouted Eróshka. 'Fine fellow, I'm fond of you!'

'Fond indeed . . .' answered Lukáshka laughing, 'carrying sweets from cadets to lasses! Eh, you old . . .'

'That's not true, not true! . . . Oh, Mark,' and the old man burst out laughing. 'And how that devil begged me. "Go," he said, "and arrange it." He offered me a gun! But no. I'd have managed it, but I feel for you. Now tell us where have you been?' And the old man began speaking in Tartar.

Lukáshka answered him promptly.

Ergushóv, who did not know much Tartar, only occasionally put in a word in Russian:

'What I say is he's driven away the horses. I know it for a fact,' he chimed in.

'Giréy and I went together.' (His speaking of Giréy Khan as 'Giréy' was, to the Cossack mind, evidence of his boldness.) 'Just beyond the river he kept bragging that he knew the whole of the steppe and would lead the way straight, but we rode on and the night was dark, and my Giréy lost his way and began wandering in a circle without getting anywhere: couldn't find the village, and there we were. We must have gone too much to the right. I believe we wandered about wellnigh till midnight. Then, thank goodness, we heard dogs howling.'

'Fools!' said Daddy Eróshka. 'There now, we too used to lose our way in the steppe. (Who the devil can follow it?) But I used to ride up a hillock and start howling like the wolves, like this!' He placed his hands before his mouth, and howled like a pack of wolves, all on one note. 'The dogs would answer at once. . . . Well, go on—so you found them?'

'We soon led them away! Nazárka was nearly caught by some Nogáy women, he was!'

'Caught indeed,' Nazárka, who had just come back, said in an injured tone.

'We rode off again, and again Gíréy lost his way and almost landed us among the sand-drifts. We thought we were just getting to the Térek but we were riding away from it all the time!'

'You should have steered by the stars,' said Daddy Eróshka.

'That's what I say,' interjected Ergushóv.

'Yes, steer when all is black; I tried and tried all about . . . and at last I put the bridle on one of the mares and let my own horse go free—thinking he'll lead us out, and what do you think! he just gave a snort or two with his nose to the ground, galloped ahead, and led us straight to our village. Thank goodness! It was getting quite light. We barely had time to hide them in the forest. Nagím came across the river and took them away.'

Ergushóv shook his head. 'It's just what I said. Smart. Did you get much for them?'

'It's all here,' said Lukáshka, slapping his pocket. Just then his mother came into the room, and Lukáshka did not finish what he was saying.

'Drink!' he shouted.

'We too, Gírich and I, rode out late one night . . . ' began Eróshka.

'Oh bother, we'll never hear the end of you!' said Lukáshka. 'I am going.' And having emptied his cup and tightened the strap of his belt he went out.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

It was already dark when Lukáshka went out into the street. The autumn night was fresh and calm. The full golden moon floated up behind the tall dark poplars that grew on one side of the square. From the chimneys of the outhouses smoke rose and spread above the village, mingling with the mist. Here and there lights shone through the windows, and the air was laden with the smell of *kisyak*, grape-pulp, and

mist. The sounds of voices, laughter, songs, and the cracking of seeds mingled just as they had done in the daytime, but were now more distinct. Clusters of white kerchiefs and caps gleamed through the darkness near the houses and by the fences.

In the square, before the shop door which was lit up and open, the black and white figures of Cossack men and maids showed through the darkness, and one heard from afar their loud songs and laughter and talk. The girls, hand in hand, went round and round in a circle stepping lightly in the dusty square. A skinny girl, the plainest of them all, set the tune:

From beyond the wood, from the forest dark,
From the garden green and the shady park,
There came out one day two young lads so gay.
Young bachelors, hey! brave and smart were they!
And they walked and walked, then stood still, each man,
And they talked and soon to dispute began!
Then a maid came out; as she came along,
Said, 'To one of you I shall soon belong!'
'Twas the fair-faced lad got the maiden fair,
Yes, the fair-faced lad with the golden hair!
Her right hand so white in his own took he,
And he led her round for his mates to see!
And said, 'Have you ever in all your life,
Met a lass as fair as my sweet little wife?'

The old women stood round listening to the songs. The little boys and girls ran about chasing one another in the dark. The men stood by, catching at the girls as the latter moved round, and sometimes breaking the ring and entering it. On the dark side of the doorway stood Belétski and Olénin, in their Circassian coats and sheepskin caps, and talked together in a style of speech unlike that of the Cossacks, in low but distinct tones, conscious that they were attracting attention. Next to one another in the *khoroúd* circle moved plump little Ústenka in her red *besmet* and the stately Maryánka in her new smock and *besmet*. Olénin and Belétski were discussing how to snatch

Ústenka and Maryánka out of the ring. Belétski thought that Olénin wished only to amuse himself, but Olénin was expecting his fate to be decided. He wanted at any cost to see Maryánka alone that very day and to tell her everything, and ask her whether she could and would be his wife. Although that question had long been answered in the negative in his own mind, he hoped he would be able to tell her all he felt, and that she would understand him.

‘Why did you not tell me sooner?’ said Belétski. ‘I would have got Ústenka to arrange it for you. You are such a queer fellow! . . .’

‘What’s to be done! . . . Some day, very soon, I’ll tell you all about it. Only now for Heaven’s sake arrange so that she should come to Ústenka’s.’

‘All right, that’s easily done! Well, Maryánka, will you belong to the “fair-faced lad,” and not to Lukáshka?’ said Belétski, speaking to Maryánka first for propriety’s sake, but having received no reply he went up to Ústenka and begged her to bring Maryánka home with her. He had hardly time to finish what he was saying before the leader began another song and the girls started pulling each other round, in the ring by the hand.

They sang:

Past the garden, by the garden,
A young man came strolling down,
Up the street and through the town.
And the first time as he passed
He did wave his strong right hand.
As the second time he passed
Waved his hat with silken band.
But the third time as he went
He stood still: before her bent.

‘How is it that thou, my dear,
My reproaches dost not fear?
In the park don’t come to walk
That we there might have a talk?’

'Come now, answer me, my dear,
Dost thou hold me in contempt?
Later on, thou knowest, dear,
Thou'lt get sober and repent.
Soon to woo thee I will come,
And when we shall married be
Thou wilt weep because of me!'

'Though I knew what to reply,
Yet I dared not him deny,
No, I dared not him deny!
So into the park went I,
In the park my lad to meet,
There my dear one I did greet.'

'Maiden dear, I bow to thee!
Take this handkerchief from me.
In thy white hand take it, see!
Say I am beloved by thee.
I don't know at all, I fear,
What I am to give thee, dear!
To my dear I think I will
Of a shawl a present make—
And five kisses for it take.'

Lukáshka and Nazárka broke into the ring and started walking about among the girls. Lukáshka joined in the singing, taking seconds in his clear voice as he walked in the middle of the ring swinging his arms. 'Well come in, one of you!' he said. The other girls pushed Maryánka, but she would not enter the ring. The sound of shrill laughter, slaps, kisses, and whispers mingled with the singing.

As he went past Olénin, Lukáshka gave a friendly nod.

'Dmítri Andréich! Have you too come to have a look?' he said.

'Yes,' answered Olénin dryly.

Belétski stooped and whispered something into Úsenka's ear. She had not time to reply till she came round again, when she said:

'All right, we'll come.'

'And Maryánka too?'

Olénin stooped towards Maryánka. 'You'll come? Please do, if only for a minute. I must speak to you.'

'If the other girls come, I will.'

'Will you answer my question?' said he, bending towards her. 'You are in good spirits to-day.'

She had already moved past him. He went after her.

'Will you answer?'

'Answer what?'

'The question I asked you the other day,' said Olénin, stooping to her ear. 'Will you marry me?'

Maryánka thought for a moment.

'I'll tell you,' said she, 'I'll tell you to-night.'

And through the darkness her eyes gleamed brightly and kindly at the young man.

He still followed her. He enjoyed stooping closer to her.

But Lukáshka, without ceasing to sing, suddenly seized her firmly by the hand and pulled her from her place in the ring of girls into the middle. Olénin had only time to say, 'Come to Ústenka's,' and stepped back to his companion. The song came to an end. Lukáshka wiped his lips, Maryánka did the same, and they kissed. 'No, no, kisses five!' said Lukáshka. Chatter, laughter, and running about, succeeded to the rhythmic movements and sound. Lukáshka, who seemed to have drunk a great deal, began to distribute sweetmeats to the girls.

'I offer them to everyone!' he said with proud, comically pathetic self-admiration. 'But anyone who goes after soldiers goes out of the ring!' he suddenly added, with an angry glance at Olénin.

The girls grabbed his sweetmeats from him, and, laughing, struggled for them among themselves. Belétski and Olénin stepped aside.

Lukáshka, as if ashamed of his generosity, took off

his cap and wiping his forehead with his sleeve came up to Maryánka and Ústenka.

'Answer me, my dear, dost thou hold me in contempt?' he said in the words of the song they had just been singing, and turning to Maryánka he angrily repeated the words: 'Dost thou hold me in contempt? When we shall married be thou wilt weep because of me!' he added, embracing Ústenka and Maryánka both together.

Ústenka tore herself away, and swinging her arm gave him such a blow on the back that she hurt her hand.

'Well, are you going to have another turn?' he asked.

'The other girls may if they like,' answered Ústenka, 'but I am going home and Maryánka was coming to our house too.'

With his arm still round her, Lukáshka led Maryánka away from the crowd to the darker corner of a house.

'Don't go, Maryánka,' he said, 'let's have some fun for the last time. Go home and I will come to you!'

'What am I to do at home? Holidays are meant for merry-making. I am going to Ústenka's', replied Maryánka.

'I'll marry you all the same, you know!'

'All right,' said Maryánka, 'we shall see when the time comes.'

'So you are going,' said Lukáshka sternly, and, pressing her close, he kissed her on the cheek.

'There, leave off! Don't bother,' and Maryánka, wrenching herself from his arms, moved away.

'Ah my girl, it will turn out badly,' said Lukáshka reproachfully and stood still, shaking his head. 'Thou wilt weep because of me . . .' and turning away from her he shouted to the other girls:

'Now then! Play away!'

What he had said seemed to have frightened and

vexed Maryánka. She stopped, 'What will turn out badly?'

'Why, that!'

'That what?'

'Why, that you keep company with a soldier-lodger and no longer care for me!'

'I'll care just as long as I choose. You're not my father, nor my mother. What do you want? I'll care for whom I like!'

'Well all right . . .' said Lukáshka, 'but remember!' He moved towards the shop. 'Girls!' he shouted, 'why have you stopped? Go on dancing. Nazárka, fetch some more *chikhir*.'

'Well, will they come?' asked Olénin, addressing Belétski.

'They'll come directly,' replied Belétski. 'Come along, we must prepare the ball.'

CHAPTER XXXIX

It was already late in the night when Olénin came out of Belétski's hut following Maryánka and Ústenka. He saw in the dark street before him the gleam of the girl's white kerchief. The golden moon was descending towards the steppe. A silvery mist hung over the village. All was still; there were no lights anywhere and one heard only the receding footsteps of the young women. Olénin's heart beat fast. The fresh moist atmosphere cooled his burning face. He glanced at the sky and turned to look at the hut he had just come out of: the candle was already out. Then he again peered through the darkness at the girls' retreating shadows. The white kerchief disappeared in the mist. He was afraid to remain alone, he was so happy. He jumped down from the porch and ran after the girls.

'Bother you, someone may see . . .' said Ústenka.

'Never mind!'

Olénin ran up to Maryánka and embraced her.

Maryánka did not resist.

'Haven't you kissed enough yet?' said Ústenka. 'Marry and then kiss, but now you'd better wait.'

'Good-night, Maryánka, to-morrow I will come to see your father and tell him. Don't you say anything.'

'Why should I!' answered Maryánka.

Both the girls started running. Olénin went on by himself thinking over all that had happened. He had spent the whole evening alone with her in a corner by the oven. Ústenka had not left the hut for a single moment, but had romped about with the other girls and with Belétski all the time. Olénin had talked in whispers to Maryánka.

'Will you marry me?' he had asked.

'You'd deceive me and not have me,' she replied cheerfully and calmly.

'But do you love me? Tell me for God's sake!'

'Why shouldn't I love you? You don't squint,' answered Maryánka, laughing and with her hard hands squeezing his. . . .

'What whi-ite, whi-i-ite, soft hands you've got—so like clotted cream,' she said.

'I am in earnest. Tell me, will you marry me?'

'Why not, if father gives me to you?'

'Well then remember, I shall go mad if you deceive me. To-morrow I will tell your mother and father. I shall come and propose.'

Maryánka suddenly burst out laughing.

'What's the matter?'

'It seems so funny!'

'It's true! I will buy a vineyard and a house and will enroll myself as a Cossack.'

'Mind you don't go after other women then. I am severe about that.'

Olénin joyfully repeated all these words to himself. The memory of them now gave him pain and now

such joy that it took away his breath. The pain was because she had remained as calm as usual while talking to him. She did not seem at all agitated by these new conditions. It was as if she did not trust him and did not think of the future. It seemed to him that she only loved him for the present moment, and that in her mind there was no future with him. He was happy because her words sounded to him true, and she had consented to be his. 'Yes,' thought he to himself, 'we shall only understand one another when she is quite mine. For such love there are no words. It needs life—the whole of life. To-morrow everything will be cleared up. I cannot live like this any longer; to-morrow I will tell everything to her father, to Belétski, and to the whole village.'

Lukáshka, after two sleepless nights, had drunk so much at the fête that for the first time in his life his feet would not carry him, and he slept in Yámka's house.

CHAPTER XL

THE next day Olénin awoke earlier than usual, and immediately remembered what lay before him, and he joyfully recalled her kisses, the pressure of her hard hands, and her words, 'What white hands you have!' He jumped up and wished to go at once to his hosts' hut to ask for their consent to his marriage with Maryánka. The sun had not yet risen, but it seemed that there was an unusual bustle in the street and side-street: people were moving about on foot and on horseback, and talking. He threw on his Circassian coat and hastened out into the porch. His hosts were not yet up. Five Cossacks were riding past and talking loudly together. In front rode Lukáshka on his broad-backed Kabardá horse. The Cossacks were all speaking and shouting so that it was impossible to make out exactly what they were saying.

'Ride to the Upper Post,' shouted one.

'Saddle and catch us up, be quick,' said another.

'It's nearer through the other gate!'

'What are you talking about?' cried Lukáshka. 'We must go through the middle gates, of course.'

'So we must, it's nearer that way,' said one of the Cossacks who was covered with dust and rode a perspiring horse. Lukáshka's face was red and swollen after the drinking of the previous night and his cap was pushed to the back of his head. He was calling out with authority as though he were an officer.

'What is the matter? Where are you going?' asked Olénin, with difficulty attracting the Cossacks' attention.

'We are off to catch *abreks*. They're hiding among the sand-drifts. We are just off, but there are not enough of us yet.'

And the Cossacks continued to shout, more and more of them joining as they rode down the street. It occurred to Olénin that it would not look well for him to stay behind; besides he thought he could soon come back. He dressed, loaded his gun with bullets, jumped onto his horse which Vanyúsha had saddled more or less well, and overtook the Cossacks at the village gates. The Cossacks had dismounted, and filling a wooden bowl with *chikhir* from a little cask which they had brought with them, they passed the bowl round to one another and drank to the success of their expedition. Among them was a smartly dressed young cornet, who happened to be in the village and who took command of the group of nine Cossacks who had joined for the expedition. All these Cossacks were privates, and although the cornet assumed the airs of a commanding officer, they only obeyed Lukáshka. Of Olénin they took no notice at all, and when they had all mounted and started, and Olénin rode up to the cornet and began asking him what was taking place, the cornet, who was usually quite friendly, treated him with marked condescension.

It was with great difficulty that Olénin managed to find out from him what was happening. Scouts who had been sent out to search for *abreks* had come upon several hillsmen some six miles from the village. These *abreks* had taken shelter in pits and had fired at the scouts, declaring they would not surrender. A corporal who had been scouting with two Cossacks had remained to watch the *abreks*, and had sent one Cossack back to get help.

The sun was just rising. Three miles beyond the village the steppe spread out and nothing was visible except the dry, monotonous, sandy, dismal plain covered with the footmarks of cattle, and here and there with tufts of withered grass, with low reeds in the flats, and rare, little-trodden footpaths, and the camps of the nomad Nogáy tribe just visible far away. The absence of shade and the austere aspect of the place were striking. The sun always rises and sets red in the steppe. When it is windy whole hills of sand are carried by the wind from place to place. When it is calm, as it was that morning, the silence, uninterrupted by any movement or sound, is peculiarly striking. That morning in the steppe it was quiet and dull, though the sun had already risen. It all seemed specially soft and desolate. The air was hushed, the footfalls and the snorting of the horses were the only sounds to be heard, and even they quickly died away.

The men rode almost silently. A Cossack always carries his weapons so that they neither jingle nor rattle. Jingling weapons are a terrible disgrace to a Cossack. Two other Cossacks from the village caught the party up and exchanged a few words. Lukáshka's horse either stumbled or caught its foot in some grass, and became restive—which is a sign of bad luck among the Cossacks, and at such a time was of special importance. The others exchanged glances and turned away, trying not to notice what had happened. Lukáshka pulled at the reins, frowned

sternly, set his teeth, and flourished his whip above his head. His good Kabardá horse, prancing from one foot to another not knowing with which to start, seemed to wish to fly upwards on wings. But Lukáshka hit its well-fed sides with his whip once, then again, and a third time, and the horse, showing its teeth and spreading out its tail, snorted and reared and stepped on its hind legs a few paces away from the others.

‘Ah, a good steed that!’ said the cornet.

That he said *steed* instead of *horse* indicated special praise.

‘A lion of a horse,’ assented one of the others, an old Cossack.

The Cossacks rode forward silently, now at a footpace, then at a trot, and these changes were the only incidents that interrupted for a moment the stillness and solemnity of their movements.

Riding through the steppe for about six miles, they passed nothing but one Nogáy tent, placed on a cart and moving slowly along at a distance of about a mile from them. A Nogáy family was moving from one part of the steppe to another. Afterwards they met two tattered Nogáy women with high cheekbones, who with baskets on their backs were gathering dung left by the cattle that wandered over the steppe. The cornet, who did not know their language well, tried to question them, but they did not understand him and, obviously frightened, looked at one another.

Lukáshka rode up to them both, stopped his horse, and promptly uttered the usual greeting. The Nogáy women were evidently relieved, and began speaking to him quite freely as to a brother.

‘*Ay-ay, kop abrek!*’ they said plaintively, pointing in the direction in which the Cossacks were going. Olénin understood that they were saying, ‘Many *abreks*.’ •

Never having seen an engagement of that kind, and having formed an idea of them only from Daddy

Eróshka's tales, Olénin wished not to be left behind by the Cossacks, but wanted to see it all. He admired the Cossacks, and was on the watch, looking and listening and making his own observations. Though he had brought his sword and a loaded gun with him, when he noticed that the Cossacks avoided him he decided to take no part in the action, as in his opinion his courage had already been sufficiently proved when he was with his detachment, and also because he was very happy.

Suddenly a shot was heard in the distance.

The cornet became excited, and began giving orders to the Cossacks as to how they should divide and from which side they should approach. But the Cossacks did not appear to pay any attention to these orders, listening only to what Lukáshka said and looking to him alone. Lukáshka's face and figure were expressive of calm solemnity. He put his horse to a trot with which the others were unable to keep pace, and screwing up his eyes kept looking ahead.

'There's a man on horseback,' he said, reining in his horse and keeping in line with the others.

Olénin looked intently, but could not see anything. The Cossacks soon distinguished two riders and quietly rode straight towards them.

'Are those the *abreks*?' asked Olénin.

The Cossacks did not answer his question, which appeared quite meaningless to them. The *abreks* would have been fools to venture across the river on horseback.

'That's friend Ródká waving to us, I do believe,' said Lukáshka, pointing to the two mounted men who were now clearly visible. 'Look, he's coming to us.'

A few minutes later it became plain that the two horsemen were the Cossack scouts. The corporal rode up to Lukáshka.

CHAPTER XLI

'ARE they far?' was all Lukáshka said.

Just then they heard a sharp shot some thirty paces off. The corporal smiled slightly.

'Our Gúrka is having shots at them,' he said, nodding in the direction of the shot.

Having gone a few paces farther they saw Gúrka sitting behind a sand-hillock and loading his gun. To while away the time he was exchanging shots with the *abreks*, who were behind another sand-heap. A bullet came whistling from their side.

The cornet was pale and grew confused. Lukáshka dismounted from his horse, threw the reins to one of the other Cossacks, and went up to Gúrka. Olénin also dismounted and, bending down, followed Lukáshka. They had hardly reached Gúrka when two bullets whistled above them. Lukáshka looked around laughing at Olénin and stooped a little.

'Look out or they will kill you, Dmítiri Andréich,' he said. 'You'd better go away—you have no business here.'

But Olénin wanted absolutely to see the *abreks*.

From behind the mound he saw caps and muskets some two hundred paces off. Suddenly a little cloud of smoke appeared from thence, and again a bullet whistled past. The *abreks* were hiding in a marsh at the foot of the hill. Olénin was much impressed by the place in which they sat. In reality it was very much like the rest of the steppe, but because the *abreks* sat there it seemed to detach itself from all the rest and to have become distinguished. Indeed it appeared to Olénin that it was the very spot for *abreks* to occupy. Lukáshka went back to his horse and Olénin followed him.

'We must get a hay-cart,' said Lukáshka, 'or they will be killing some of us. There behind that mound is a Nogáy cart with a load of hay.'

The cornet listened to him and the corporal agreed. The cart of hay was fetched, and the Cossacks, hiding behind it, pushed it forward. Olénin rode up a hillock from whence he could see everything. The hay-cart moved on and the Cossacks crowded together behind it. The Cossacks advanced, but the Chéchens, of whom there were nine, sat with their knees in a row and did not fire.

All was quiet. Suddenly from the Chéchens arose the sound of a mournful song, something like Daddy Eróshka's 'Ay day, dalalay'. The Chéchens knew that they could not escape, and to prevent themselves from being tempted to take to flight they had strapped themselves together, knee to knee, had got their guns ready, and were singing their death-song.

The Cossacks with their hay-cart drew closer and closer, and Olénin expected the firing to begin at any moment, but the silence was only broken by the *abreks'* mournful song. Suddenly the song ceased; there was a sharp report, a bullet struck the front of the cart, and Chéchen curses and yells broke the silence and shot followed on shot and one bullet after another struck the cart. The Cossacks did not fire and were now only five paces distant.

Another moment passed and the Cossacks with a whoop rushed out on both sides from behind the cart—Lukáshka in front of them. Olénin heard only a few shots, then shouting and moans. He thought he saw smoke and blood, and abandoning his horse and quite beside himself he ran towards the Cossacks. Horror seemed to blind him. He could not make out anything, but understood that all was over. Lukáshka, pale as death, was holding a wounded Chéchen by the arms and shouting, 'Don't kill him. I'll take him alive!' The Chéchen was the red-haired man who had fetched his brother's body away after Lukáshka had killed him. Lukáshka was twisting his arms. Suddenly the Chéchen wrenched himself free and

fired his pistol. Lukáshka fell, and blood began to flow from his stomach. He jumped up, but fell again, swearing in Russian and in Tartar. More and more blood appeared on his clothes and under him. Some Cossacks approached him and began loosening his girdle. One of them, Nazárka, before beginning to help, fumbled for some time unable to put his sword in its sheath: it would not go the right way. The blade of the sword was blood-stained.

The Chéchens with their red hair and clipped moustaches lay dead and hacked about. Only the one we know of, who had fired at Lukáshka, though wounded in many places was still alive. Like a wounded hawk all covered with blood (blood was flowing from a wound under his right eye), pale and gloomy, he looked about him with wide-open excited eyes and clenched teeth as he crouched, dagger in hand, still prepared to defend himself. The cornet went up to him as if intending to pass by, and with a quick movement shot him in the ear. The Chéchen started up, but it was too late, and he fell.

The Cossacks, quite out of breath, dragged the bodies aside and took the weapons from them. Each of the red-haired Chéchens had been a man, and each one had his own individual expression. Lukáshka was carried to the cart. He continued to swear in Russian and in Tartar.

‘No fear, I’ll strangle him with my hands. *Anna seni!*’ he cried, struggling. But he soon became quiet from weakness.

Olénin rode home. In the evening he was told that Lukáshka was at death’s door, but that a Tartar from beyond the river had undertaken to cure him with herbs.

The bodies were brought to the village office. The women and the little boys hastened to look at them.

It was growing dark when Olénin returned, and he could not collect himself after what he had seen.

But towards night memories of the evening before came rushing to his mind. He looked out of the window, Maryánka was passing to and fro from the house to the cowshed, putting things straight. Her mother had gone to the vineyard and her father to the office. Olénin could not wait till she had quite finished her work, but went out to meet her. She was in the hut standing with her back towards him. Olénin thought she felt shy.

‘Maryánka,’ said he, ‘I say, Maryánka! May I come in?’

She suddenly turned. There was a scarcely perceptible trace of tears in her eyes and her face was beautiful in its sadness. She looked at him in silent dignity.

Olénin again said:

‘Maryánka, I have come——’

‘Leave me alone!’ she said. Her face did not change but the tears ran down her cheeks.

‘What are you crying for? What is it?’

‘What?’ she repeated in a rough voice. ‘Cossacks have been killed, that’s what for.’

‘Lukáshka?’ said Olénin.

‘Go away! What do you want?’

‘Maryánka!’ said Olénin, approaching her.

‘You will never get anything from me!’

‘Maryánka, don’t speak like that,’ Olénin entreated.

‘Get away. I’m sick of you!’ shouted the girl, stamping her foot, and moved threateningly towards him. And her face expressed such abhorrence, such contempt, and such anger that Olénin suddenly understood that there was no hope for him, and that his first impression of this woman’s inaccessibility had been perfectly correct.

Olénin said nothing more, but ran out of the hut,

CHAPTER XLII

FOR two hours after returning home he lay on his bed motionless. Then he went to his company commander and obtained leave to visit the staff. Without taking leave of anyone, and sending Vanyúsha to settle his accounts with his landlord, he prepared to leave for the fort where his regiment was stationed. Daddy Eróshka was the only one to see him off. They had a drink, and then a second, and then yet another. Again as on the night of his departure from Moscow, a three-horsed conveyance stood waiting at the door. But Olénin did not confer with himself as he had done then, and did not say to himself that all he had thought and done here was 'not it'. He did not promise himself a new life. He loved Maryánka more than ever, and knew that he could never be loved by her.

'Well, good-bye, my lad!' said Daddy Eróshka. 'When you go on an expedition, be wise and listen to my words—the words of an old man. When you are out on a raid or the like (you know I'm an old wolf and have seen things), and when they begin firing, don't get into a crowd where there are many men. When you fellows get frightened you always try to get close together with a lot of others. You think it is merrier to be with others, but that's where it is worst of all! They always aim at a crowd. Now I used to keep farther away from the others and went alone, and I've never been wounded. Yet what things haven't I seen in my day?'

'But you've got a bullet in your back,' remarked Vanyúsha, who was clearing up the room.

'That was the Cossacks fooling about,' answered Eróshka.

'Cossacks? How was that?' asked Olénin.

'Oh, just so. We were drinking. Vánka Sítkin, one of the Cossacks, got merry, and puff! he gave me one from his pistol just here.'

'Yes, and did it hurt?' asked Olénin. 'Vanyúsha, will you soon be ready?' he added.

'Ah, where's the hurry! Let me tell you. When he banged into me, the bullet did not break the bone but remained here. And I say: "You've killed me, brother. Eh! What have you done to me? I won't let you off! You'll have to stand me a pailful!"'

'Well, but did it hurt?' Olénin asked again, scarcely listening to the tale.

'Let me finish. He stood a pailful, and we drank it, but the blood went on flowing. The whole room was drenched and covered with blood. Grandad Burlák, he says, "The lad will give up the ghost. Stand a bottle of the sweet sort, or we shall have you taken up!" They bought more drink, and boozed and boozed——'

'Yes, but did it hurt you much?' Olénin asked once more.

'Hurt, indeed! Don't interrupt: I don't like it. Let me finish. We boozed and boozed till morning, and I fell asleep on the top of the oven, drunk. When I woke in the morning I could not unbend myself anyhow——'

'Was it very painful?' repeated Olénin, thinking that now he would at last get an answer to his question.

'Did I tell you it was painful? I did not say it was painful, but I could not bend and could not walk.'

'And then it healed up?' said Olénin, not even laughing, so heavy was his heart.

'It healed up, but the bullet is still there. Just feel it!' And lifting his shirt he showed his powerful back, where just near the bone a bullet could be felt and rolled about.

'Feel how it rolls,' he said, evidently amusing himself with the bullet as with a toy. 'There now, it has rolled to the back.'

'And Lukáshka, will he recover?' asked Olénin.

'Heaven only knows! There's no doctor. They've gone for one.'

'Where will they get one? From Gróznoc?' asked Olénin.

'No, my lad. Were I the Tsar I'd have hung all your Russian doctors long ago. Cutting is all they know! There's our Cossack Bakláshka, no longer a real man now that they've cut off his leg! That shows they're fools. What's Bakláshka good for now? No, my lad, in the mountains there are real doctors. There was my chum, Vórchik, he was on an expedition and was wounded just here in the chest. Well, your doctors gave him up, but one of theirs came from the mountains and cured him! They understand herbs, my lad!'

'Come, stop talking rubbish,' said Olénin. 'I'd better send a doctor from head-quarters.'

'Rubbish!' the old man said mockingly. 'Fool, fool! Rubbish. You'll send a doctor!—If yours cured people, Cossacks and Chéchens would go to you for treatment, but as it is your officers and colonels send to the mountains for doctors. Yours are all humbugs, all humbugs.'

Olénin did not answer. He agreed only too fully that all was humbug in the world in which he had lived and to which he was now returning.

'How is Lukáshka? You've been to see him?' he asked.

'He just lies as if he were dead. He does not eat nor drink. Vodka is the only thing his soul accepts. But as long as he drinks vodka it's well. I'd be sorry to lose the lad. A fine lad—a brave, like me. I too lay dying like that once. The old women were already wailing. My head was burning. They had already laid me out under the holy icons. So I lay there, and above me on the oven little drummers, no bigger than this, beat the tattoo. I shout at them and they drum all the harder.' (The old man laughed.) 'The women brought our church elder. They were getting ready to bury me. They said, "he defiled himself

with worldly unbelievers; he made merry with women; he ruined people; he did not fast, and he played the *balaláyka*." "Confess," they said. So I began to confess. "I've sinned!" I said. Whatever the priest said, I always answered "I've sinned." He began to ask me about the *balaláyka*. "Where is the accursed thing," he says. "Show it me and smash it." But I say, "I've not got it." I'd hidden it myself in a net in the out-house. I knew they could not find it. So they left me. Yet after all I recovered. When I went for my *balaláyka*—— What was I saying?" he continued. 'Listen to me, and keep farther away from the other men or you'll get killed foolishly. I feel for you, truly: you are a drinker—I love you! And fellows like you like riding up the mounds. There was one who lived here who had come from Russia, he always would ride up the mounds (he called the mounds so funnily, "hillocks"). Whenever he saw a mound, off he'd gallop. Once he galloped off that way and rode to the top quite pleased, but a Chéchen fired at him and killed him! Ah, how well they shoot from their gun-rests, those Chéchens! Some of them shoot even better than I do. I don't like it when a fellow gets killed so foolishly! Sometimes I used to look at your soldiers and wonder at them. There's foolishness for you! They go, the poor fellows, all in a clump, and even sew red collars to their coats! How can they help being hit! One gets killed, they drag him away and another takes his place! What foolishness!' the old man repeated, shaking his head. 'Why not scatter, and go one by one? So you just go like that and they won't notice you. That's what you must do.'

'Well, thank you! Good-bye, Daddy. God willing we may meet again,' said Olénin, getting up and moving towards the passage.

The old man, who was sitting on the floor, did not rise.

'Is that the way one says "Good-bye"?' Fool, fool!

he began. 'Oh dear, what has come to people? We've kept company, kept company for wellnigh a year, and now "Good-bye!" and off he goes! Why, I love you, and how I pity you! You are so forlorn, always alone, always alone. You're somehow so unsociable. At times I can't sleep for thinking about you. I am so sorry for you. As the song has it:

It is very hard, dear brother,
In a foreign land to live.

So it is with you.'

'Well, good-bye,' said Olénin again.

The old man rose and held out his hand. Olénin pressed it and turned to go.

'Give us your mug, your mug!'

And the old man took Olénin by the head with both hands and kissed him three times with wet moustaches and lips, and began to cry.

'I love you, good-bye!'

Olénin got into the cart.

'Well, is that how you're going? You might give me something for a remembrance. Give me a gun! What do you want two for?' said the old man, sobbing quite sincerely.

Olénin got out a musket and gave it to him.

'What a lot you've given the old fellow,' murmured Vanyúsha, 'he'll never have enough! A regular old beggar. They are all such irregular people,' he remarked, as he wrapped himself in his overcoat and took his seat on the box.

'Hold your tongue, swine!' exclaimed the old man, laughing. 'What a stingy fellow!'

Maryánka came out of the cowshed, glanced indifferently at the cart, bowed and went towards the hut.

'*La fille!*' said Vanyúsha, with a wink and burst out into a silly laugh.

'Drive on!' shouted Olénin, angrily.

'Good-bye, my lad! Good-bye. I won't forget you!' shouted Eróshka.

Olénin turned round. Daddy Eróshka was talking to Maryánka, evidently about his own affairs, and neither the old man nor the girl looked at Olénin.

Finished Dec. 19, 1862.

PREFACE TO ERSHÓV'S

RECOLLECTIONS OF SEVASTOPOL

A. I. ERSHÓV has sent me his book, *Recollections of Sevastopol*, and has asked me to read it and say what impression it makes on me.

I have read it, and willingly tell of the impression it makes on me, for that impression is a very strong one. It has caused me to re-experience with the author what he and I lived through thirty-four years ago. We then experienced what the author describes—the horror of war, but we also experienced a mental condition the author hardly describes at all.

A lad fresh from the Cadet College finds himself in Sevastopol. A few months ago he was as merry and happy as girls are the day after marriage. It seems but yesterday that he first donned the officer's uniform an expert tailor had skilfully padded with wadding, arranging the thick cloth and the shoulder-straps to mask the boyish and still undeveloped chest and give it a brave appearance. It seems but yesterday that he put on that uniform and drove to the hair-dresser's to have his hair curled and pomaded and his incipient moustaches accentuated with *fixative*, and that clanking the sabre attached to his gilt belt against the steps and with his cap on one side, he walked down the street. It is no longer *he* who has to be on the watch lest he fail to notice and salute some passing officer, it is now *his* approach that is looked out for by the privates, and he carelessly raises his hand to his cap and commands 'at ease'. Only yesterday his commander, the General, talked to him seriously as to an equal, and a brilliant military career seemed to him certain. • Was it not yesterday his old nurse was so surprised to see what he looked like, and his mother was so touched that she wept for joy, kissing and

caressing him, while he felt both happy and ashamed? It was only yesterday that he met a lovely girl; they spoke of trifles, the lips of both were wreathed with suppressed smiles, and he knew that she (and not only she, but hundreds of other girls a thousand times better) might, and must, love him. It all seems to have happened but yesterday. It may have been trivial and absurd and conceited, but it was all innocent and therefore pleasing.

And now he is in Sevastopol, and suddenly sees that something is not right, something is happening that is not at all as it should be. His commander calmly tells him that he—whose mother so loves him, and from whom not she alone but every one expected so much that is good—that he, with all his special and incomparable physical and mental excellences, is to go where men are being killed and crippled. The commander does not deny that he is the same youth whom all love and must love and whose life is more important to him than anything else in the world. The commander does not deny this, but simply says: 'Go, and let yourself be killed.' His heart contracts with a double fear: the fear of death and the fear of shame; but pretending that it is all the same to him whether he goes to death or remains here, he gets ready with a show of interest in what he is going for, and even in his belongings and bed. He goes to the place where men are killed, and hopes it is only *said* that men are killed there, but that that is not really the case and things will turn out otherwise. But half an hour at the bastion is ample to show that the reality is more terrible and more unbearable than he expected. He sees a man radiant with joy and blooming with health. Suddenly something splashes, and the man tumbles over into a neighbouring heap of excrements—a terrible example of suffering and remorse and an exposure of all that is being done there. It is awful,—it will not do to look at it or think about it.

But it is impossible not to think: that time it happened to him, soon it will happen to me. How is it? Why is it? Why should they do it to me,—to me who was so good, so nice, so dear, not only to my nurse, not only to my mother, not only to ‘her’, but to so many people—to almost everybody? On the way to Sevastopol, at the post-stations, how fond people were of me and how we laughed, and how pleased they were with me and how they gave me a tobacco-pouch! But here—not only does no one think of giving me a pouch, but no one cares how or when they mutilate this body, these legs, these arms—or even kill me as they killed that fellow. Whether I shall to-day be what he now is, no one cares; on the contrary it almost seems as if they wished it. Yes, I—even I—am not wanted by any one. But if I am not wanted why am I here? He asks himself the question but can find no answer. It were well if some one would explain, or if not explain, at least say something encouraging. But no one ever says anything of the sort. Apparently nothing of the kind can be said. One would be too much ashamed to say it, and so no one tries to say anything of the kind. Then why, why, am I here? exclaims the lad to himself, and wishes to cry. But there is no answer, except a painful shrinking of the heart. A sergeant appears,—and the lad makes pretence. . . . Time passes. Others are looking at him or he thinks they are looking, and he makes every effort not to disgrace himself. And not to disgrace himself he must do as the others do: not think, but smoke, drink, jest, and hide his feelings. And so a day passes, another, a third,—a week. . . . And the boy becomes accustomed to concealing his fears and stifling his thoughts. What is most terrible of all to him is that he alone lives in this ignorance of why he is here in this horrible position. The others, it seems to him, know something, and he wishes to get them to be frank about it. He thinks it would be

easier to bear if it were acknowledged that all are in the same dreadful position. But to make the others speak on this matter turns out to be impossible. They fear to speak about it as much as he does. It will not bear being spoken of. One must talk about escarps and counterscarps, about porter, promotions, rations, cards—that is all right. And so day passes after day: the lad becomes accustomed to not thinking, not asking, not speaking about what he is doing, but still he feels all the time that he is doing something quite contrary to his whole nature. So things continue for many months, the lad is not killed, is not crippled, and—the war is over.

The terrible moral torture is over. No one has found out how he feared, how he wished to go away and did not know why he remained. At last he can draw breath, recollect himself, and think over what has happened.

What has happened? This: that for many months I have feared and suffered, hiding my sufferings from others. Of exploits—that is to say deeds of which I could be proud or at least recall with pleasure—there have been none. My only exploit was that I stood as food for cannon and long remained in a place where many men were shot in the head, the breast, and in all parts of their bodies. All that however is a personal aspect of the matter; besides that I had a share (if but an unimportant one) in a common cause. A common cause? But what was it? Destroying scores—thousands—of men . . . and what else? Sevastopol—that Sevastopol which we defended—was abandoned and the fleet sunk, and the keys of the church at Jerusalem¹ remained in the hands of those who had them before, and Russia is humiliated. And what

¹ The handing over of the key of the chief door of the church of Bethlehem to the Latin Patriarch on 22nd December 1852 was one of the proximate causes of the Crimean War.

conclusion must one draw? Can it be that it all comes to this: that it was owing to foolishness and youthfulness that I got into the terrible and inextricable position in which I remained for seven months and from which I was incompetent to liberate myself? Can that be all?

The lad is in the most favourable position to come to this unavoidable and logical conclusion; for, first, the war has ended in disgrace and has nothing to excuse it (there has been no liberation of Europe, or of Bulgaria, &c.); secondly, the lad has not been crippled for life nor paid any other tribute to war that would render it hard for him to admit that the cause of his sufferings was a blunder; neither has he received any special distinctions which he would have to renounce were he to renounce war. The lad could tell the truth, which is that he casually found himself in an inextricable position, and not knowing how to escape from it continued in it until it solved itself. He wishes to say this and would surely have said it plainly. But then, at first with astonishment, he hears around him talk of the late war not as of something disgraceful, as it appeared to him, but as of something not merely very good but even extraordinarily so. He hears that the defence in which he took part was a great historic event, an event unparalleled in the world's history, and that those who were in Sevastopol, including himself, were heroes among heroes, and that the fact that he did not run away (like an artillery horse that did not break its halter and escape) was a great deed, and that he is a hero. And so, first with surprise and then with interest, the lad listens, and loses the strength of mind to tell the whole truth,—he cannot speak against his comrades, cannot give them away. But still he wishes to tell at least part of the truth, and writes a description of what he has gone through in which he tries to give his experience. He describes his share in the war: how around him

men were being killed and how he felt fear and disgust and pity.

To the first question that suggests itself to every one: Why did he do it? Why did he not cease, and go away?—the author does not reply. He does not say, as men said in olden times when they hated their enemies as the Jews hated the Philistines, that he hated the Allies; on the contrary, here and there he shows his sympathy for them as for fellow men.

Nor does he speak of any passionate desire that the keys of the church at Jerusalem should be in our hands, or even that our fleet should, or should not, exist. As you read, you feel that for him the life and death of men are not commensurable with questions of politics. And the reader feels that to the question: Why did the author act as he did?—there is only one answer: It was because I was enlisted while still young, or before the war began, or because owing to inexperience I chanced to slip into a position from which I could not extricate myself without great effort. I was entrapped into that position and when they obliged me to do the most unnatural actions in the world, to kill my fellow men who had done me no harm,—I preferred to do this rather than suffer punishment and disgrace. And though the book contains some short allusions to the love of Tsar and fatherland, one feels that this is only a tribute exacted by the conditions in which the author was placed. Though it is assumed that since it is noble to sacrifice one's limbs or life, therefore all the sufferings and deaths that are encountered constitute merit in those who endure them,—one feels that the author knows this is not true, for he does not freely sacrifice his life, but while killing others involuntarily puts his own life in danger. One feels that the author knows there is a law of God: love thy neighbour and therefore do not kill him,—a law which cannot be repealed by any human artifice.

The merit of the book consists in that. It is a pity it is only felt, and not plainly and clearly expressed. Sufferings and deaths are described, but we are not told what caused them. Thirty-five years ago even that was well, but now something more is needed. We should be told what it is that causes soldiers to suffer and die, that we may know and understand and destroy these causes.

'War! How terrible,' people say, 'is war, with its wounds, bloodshed, and deaths. We must organize a Red Cross Society to alleviate the wounds, sufferings, and pains of death.' But, truly, what is dreadful in war are not the wounds, sufferings, and deaths. The human race that has always suffered and died should by this time be accustomed to suffering and death, and should not be aghast at them. Without war people die from famine, from inundations, and from epidemics. It is not suffering and death that are terrible, but it is that which allows people to inflict suffering and death.

One little word from a man who requests another to have some one hanged for him to study,¹ and a word from the other replying: 'Very well, let's hang him'—one such word is full of suffering and death. One such word, printed and read, carries in itself the death and suffering of millions. It is not the suffering and mutilation and death of man's body that most needs to be diminished—it is the mutilation and death of his soul. Not the *Red* Cross is needed, but the simple cross of Christ to destroy falsehood and deception. . . .

I was finishing this Preface when a cadet from the Military College came to see me. He told me that he

¹ This refers to the statement made by the well-known Russian artist Vereshchagin (who was alive when Tolstoy wrote this preface), that during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 he requested an officer to have a spy hanged there, and then, that he (the artist) might make a study of the execution.

was troubled by religious doubts. He had read Dostoévski's 'The Great Inquisitor', and was troubled by doubts why Jesus should have preached a doctrine so hard to carry out. He had read nothing of mine. I spoke cautiously to him of how to read the Gospels so as to find in them the answers to life's problems. He listened and agreed. Towards the end of our conversation I mentioned wine and advised him not to drink. He replied: 'But in military service it is sometimes necessary.' I thought he meant necessary for health and strength, and intended triumphantly to overthrow him by proofs from experience and science, but he continued: 'Why at Geok-Tepe, for instance, when Skóbelev had to massacre the inhabitants, the soldiers did not wish to do it, but he had drink served out and then. . . .' Here are all the horrors of war—they are in this lad with his fresh young face, his little shoulder-straps under which the ends of his *bashlik*¹ are so neatly tucked, his well-cleaned boots, his naïve eyes, and so perverted a conception of life.

This is the real horror of war!

What millions of Red Cross workers could heal the wounds that swarm in that remark—the result of a whole system of education?

10th May, o.s.,

¹ The *bashlik* is a hood of cloth or felt, to protect the head from the cold. It has long ends to tie round the neck.

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